Standoff draws police agencies, gawkers

Situation ends with arrest of man for felonious assault — no injuries

By Tim Jagielo

Fenton — What could have been a simple welfare check for a man who was rumored to have been off his medication turned into a nearly six-hour standoff with police Sunday evening. It ended safely with the man attempting to escape from his second story window, where he was apprehended by Michigan State Police (MSP) around 8 p.m. He was charged with felonious assault for threatening police.

The Freedom Park

Elephant draws controversy during Linden Mills Days

Some cite animal cruelty, bombard organizers with disparaging comments

By William Axford

An elephant brought to Linden for the Linden Mills Days this past weekend drew some controversy from animal rights activists. Flyers circulated condemning the treatment of Nosey (also known as ‘Tiny’ or ‘Peanut’) the elephant while children rode and fed the tusked animal. Organizers of the Linden Mills Days said they were only trying to educate their customers.

If I felt this animal was abused in any way, I wouldn’t have had it there.

Cyndi Roesner, organizer of the Linden Mills Days

Fenton amends fireworks ordinance

Late night explosions could cost violators $500 fine

By Ryan Tackabury

If you want to light off fireworks for the Fourth of July you will have to do so before 1 a.m.

New legislation passed by the state of Michigan has given local governments more power in regulating fireworks.

DDA’s master plan likely to take years to implement

First projects will be highly visible this time next year

By Ryan Tackabury

There are a lot of projects currently coming to fruition in downtown Fenton. Next year will see the city of Fenton looking anew with the Cornerstone building, the Fire Hall restaurant, an expanded community center and renovated streetscape.

To make all of this happen and leap from the page to reality, requires planning, forethought, and of course — a lot of patience. The plan was drafted together by the city council, downtown development authority (DDA) and the planning commission six years ago.

“They were able to develop

First-Try Triathlon a triumph for ‘regular people’

Jon Wright of Knoxville, Tenn. high-fives brother-in-law Jamie Francek of Clawson, as he finishes the First-Try Triathlon in Linden on Saturday. Both lost 50 pounds leading up to the event, and both passed in just over an hour. “This is definitely a big moment for us,” said Wright.

See story on Page 13
TEEN’S BIKE STOLEN
On Sunday, June 23, a Linden police officer was approached by a 16-year-old Linden male who reported that someone had stolen his bicycle. Police Chief Scott Sutter said the teen said that he had parked his red 20-inch Eastern BMX bicycle at Linden Elementary so that he could attend the carnival. When he returned a few hours later, his bicycle, which was not locked up, was missing. Police have no suspects.

ALL QUIET AT FESTIVAL
Linden Police Chief Scott Sutter said there were no police incidents related to the Linden Mills Days held in downtown Linden over the weekend. He said it was quite quiet.

ILLEGAL DUMPING
Fenton police responded to a business in the 3200 block of Silver Lake Road to investigate an illegal dumping complaint. The owner of the business said that someone illegally dumped several pieces of commercial-grade kitchen equipment in his dumpster, including sinks and countertops.

Lending a helping paw
▶ Trained therapy animals help brighten days, moods of hospital patients
By Ryan Tackabury
news@tctimes.com; 810-629-8282
They can be taught to fetch, sit, and shake, though there are many dogs that are trained to perform a different set of therapeutic skills.

In fact, it’s not limited to just dogs, there are many different types of animals that qualify to become certified therapy animals — cats, rabbits, even pot-bellied pigs, though dogs are the most common.

Not every animal can make the cut though — it takes the right temperament, a mixture of friendliness, patience, and a love of humans.

“There’s actually volunteers who have dogs who went through a special training and once those dogs successfully complete the training, the volunteer and that particular dog come in and visit,” said See PAW on 11.

The many benefits of homeowners insurance
▶ Fenton Township resident thankful for comprehensive coverage, local agency
By William Axford
axford@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792
Kelly Smith’s home may be gone but that doesn’t mean the Fenton Township resident is homeless. Shortly after a tornado destroyed her home, Smith’s insurance company worked to get a rental home on her property so she didn’t have to live out of hotels or with family members. Smith said she is thankful her insurance company, Brad Hoffman Insurance, had steered her toward getting comprehensive coverage for her home.

“They were out there the next day, helping us and inspecting the damage,” Smith said. “They were wonderful. I heard a lot of horror stories from my neighbors. Some of them had to fight with their insurance provider and a lot of them didn’t even know where they were located.”

Linda Hathaway, owner of Brad Hoffman Insurance, said Smith will be able to recover most, if not all of her items lost in the storm and that a new See INSURANCE on 12.

Spring Repair Special...
• Missing shingles or leaking roof?
• Stuck windows or broken glass?
• Missing or damaged siding?
• Gutters damaged or clogged?

CALL OUR REPAIR TEAM TODAY: 1-800-305-6931
Fast-food workers echo Occupy spirit

Labor unions have been knocked back, knocked down and knocked out for so long that a new generation of organizers is beginning to try something new. Instead of unionizing and then protesting, they’re protesting first. The new strategy involves helping workers protest for more money and benefits and, after winning some victories, hope the workers will form a union. Perhaps you have seen — or been inconvenienced — by one of the protests that have sprung up since early April in Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Detroit, Seattle and Washington, D.C., at fast-food restaurants and, in some cities, retail stores.

In the wake of the Occupy Wall Street protests, and public-worker union protests in Wisconsin and elsewhere, the issue of income inequality has a new urgency — especially when private-sector union membership is down to 6.6 percent.

In the nation’s capital, the local Fast Food Forward protests have a special federal flavor and it’s aimed directly at Food Forward protests, and public-worker union protests in Wisconsin and elsewhere, the issue of income inequality has a new urgency — especially when private-sector union membership is down to 6.6 percent.

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The carnival life

Life-long carnival workers are modern nomads

By William Axford
axford@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792

Linden — Eva Cortwright has been in the carnival business longer than some people have been alive. The 89-year-old has spent 57 years traveling from festival to festival, working different attractions and bringing smiles to kids’ faces.

“It keeps you young, keeps you healthy,” Cortwright said as kids handed her tickets and ran through her house of mirrors attraction. “I don’t have too much longer to go but I feel good.”

The Skerbeck Carnival Brothers occupied the Linden Elementary School parking lot this weekend as part of the Linden Mills Days festival. Cortwright is one of hundreds of workers that follow carnivals from state to state. Some own their attractions while others operate the company’s equipment. Cortwright ‘married into the business’ so to speak as her husband was already involved with carnival attractions before she met him. The Texas native now spends half of the year traveling and the other half roaming around Michigan with her husband.

On Friday, Fred Kohnke challenged people to try and bounce a light plastic ball off a board and into a basket below. While Kohnke could execute the challenge nearly every time, people hoping to secure a prized, giant stuffed animal did not have such luck.

Kohnke said he loves the freedoms that come with working with carnivals, likening his life to Jackson Browne’s song ‘The Road.’

“I don’t like to stay in one spot,” said Kohnke, who has worked with numerous carnival companies during the last 30 years. “It’s a family — we laugh, we fight, we argue. All these people are loners and travelers.”

See CARNIVAL on 10
School violence hotline approved

Senate Bill 374 recently passes to create a 24/7 statewide school violence hotline.

By Olivia Dimmer

The Michigan Senate unanimously voted to pass Senate Bill 374 to create a school violence hotline that is available 24/7 for all students in Michigan. The confidential hotline will also be equipped to receive photos and videos. The hotline, called OK-2-SAY, will be funded by the state — not the schools — as approved in House Bill 4112.

“Giving schools and families more tools to keep kids safe is a top concern for everyone,” state senator Jim Ananich (D-Flint) said. “This legislation is one part of what needs to be a large, comprehensive effort to improve public safety in our communities.”

This legislation would work in cooperation with schools that already have safety hotlines in place, like Linden and Fenton schools. The only difference with the statewide hotline is information received is required to be shared with local law enforcement. The OK-2-SAY program is aimed at discouraging the atmosphere of silence among students through easy and confidential communication.

“It’s important to help everyone be more willing to speak up to prevent violence — whether it be in school, in the home, or in their neighborhood,” Ananich said. “This is just one step toward that goal, but we need to do as much as we can on this important issue.”

Giving schools and families more tools to keep kids safe is a top concern for everyone.

Jim Ananich, State senator

Obtaining records

There are occasions in life when it is important to know exactly what an individual’s past history is regarding criminal convictions and/or their driving record including to ensure that they are accurate. In Michigan, these are records that a person can obtain to see what the state shows their history to be.

For those who are interested in obtaining their own records, the Michigan State Police and Michigan Secretary of State websites have step-by-step directions as to how to get them.

For criminal history records there are two possibilities.

To search by name on the Internet without the necessity of submitting fingerprints, you must go to www.michigan.gov/ichat. You will be required to register with an email address as well as your own name and address. You will then need to submit a password. After registering, you will click on ‘search for criminal history’ and be asked how many searches you want. There is a $10 cost for each search payable by credit card.

An individual can also request their own criminal history (both public and nonpublic) by going to a local Michigan law enforcement agency and being fingerprinted on a Michigan Applicant Fingerprint Card (RI-8). The card needs to be fully filled out and mailed to the Michigan State Police, CRD, Identification Section, P.O. Box 30266, Lansing, MI 48918-1502. These are processed and mailed back in up to six to eight weeks. It takes three to five weeks for it to be processed and then mailed back.

For driving records, there is a Michigan Secretary of State form available online which allows you to obtain your own record. It is to be fully filled out and then mailed with a $7 fee to Michigan Department of State, Record Lookup Unit, 7064 Crown Drive, Lansing, MI 48918-1502. These are processed and mailed back in up to six to eight weeks.

Another option is to go to any Secretary of State branch, present your driver’s license and walk out with a certified copy for an $8 fee.

There are various good and valid reasons that people wish to check their records including the possibility that a reporting error has been made or a stolen identity. More complete directions are available on the State of Michigan website.
ELEPHANT
Continued from Front Page

the festival dealt with complaints during the course of the four-day festival, centered on accusations that Nosey was being abused.

Organizer Cyndi Roesner said she was approached by Nosey’s owner Hugo Tomi Liebel on whether the elephant could be a part of the event. Roesner said she had initially heard of some complaints about possible animal abuse but after doing her own investigation, Roesner said Liebel rescued the animal and treats it well.

“(Nosey’s) parents were both poached and she was adopted,” Roesner said. “(The Liebels) love her and take care of her. If it had been any different, it would have been unacceptable to me.”

Comments condemning organizers flooded the Linden Mills Days Facebook page throughout the weekend. Fenton native Nicole Wasson, who now lives in Rochester Hills posted, “Boycott! Shame on you for exploiting animals.”

Cyndy Reeker of Linden wrote “So sad to see the elephant and horses in town. Bad way to get people to come to the event. Maybe next year whoever decides what will be at this event will bow out and let others plan.”

Nosey remained on the Union Block property downtown during Mills Days, where children could take rides on her back and people could feed her. Protesters decreed that Nosey was confined to a set space and was chained up at night.

“One lady said to me, ‘It was so hot, how does the elephant survive?’” Roesner said. “I told her, ‘do you know how hot it is in Africa?’”

Roesner said she watched the Liebel family interact with the elephant throughout the weekend and did not see any signs of abuse.

According to a flyer distributed by protestors, the “U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited Liebel numerous times (33 to date) for failure to give veterinary care to an African elephant... Why is our community supporting this and teaching our children it is OK to treat life this way?”

A online search conducted by Times found various petitions to release Nosey from the Liebel family however, any charges filed by the USDA and other government agencies could not be substantiated.

A representative with the Genesee County USDA office said they were unaware of any citations to Liebel on the handling of Nosey. Calls to the state and federal USDA were not returned before press time.

“If the elephant was sent back to Africa, it would die,” Roesner said. “If I felt the elephant was abused in any way, I wouldn’t have had it here.”

“(Nosey’s) parents were both poached and she was adopted. (The Liebels) love her and take care of her. If it had been any different, it would have been unacceptable to me.”

Cyndi Roesner, Organizer of the Linden Mills Days


The state statue also prohibits any use of fireworks while under the influence of alcohol.

“I just want to compliment the chief and our attorney on acting so quickly on this. Other communities are finding themselves in the situation where they have had to call special meetings. We were ready,” said Councilwoman Pat Lockwood. “I believe this is what communities across Michigan have been looking for is to be able to have local participation and discussion at the table.”

State lawmakers to combat illegal metal scrapping

Catalytic converters, copper generally most stolen items

By William Axford

Michigan legislators are aiming to combat illegal metal scrapping operations, an issue that is striking people all over the country. The proposed legislation would delay pay on items like catalytic converters and copper, which are items commonly stolen for scrap metal. The proposed legislation will also require scrap yard employees to photograph and sign off on accepted scrap metal.

The legislation will continue to be deliberated upon when lawmakers return to Lansing after the two-month summer break. Currently scrap dealers are required See SCRAPPING on 9
Shiawassee River cleanup a success

► Water bottles are most common item found thrown in the river

By Ryan Tackabury  
news@tctimes.com; 810-629-8282

Water bottles were found in large numbers at this year’s annual Shiawassee River cleanup, and they were accompanied by chairs, tires, and shoes. Starting from Bush Park and ending by the Torrey Road Bridge, 15 people made their way through the city removing countless bags of garbage from the water.

“We had a really good turnout and cooperation from so many people and so many local businesses. We couldn’t have done it without them,” said Fenton City Councilman Bradley Jacob, who organized the cleanup.

Though it was a lot of work, Jacob said the day was also a lot of fun. The river cleanup is always the third Saturday of June every year, and Jacob invites anyone who would like to lend a hand to come out next year.

A group of volunteers, led by Fenton City Councilman Bradley Jacob pull out an array of debris from the Shiawassee River on Saturday, during their annual river cleanup.
There’s a problem with scrapping in general, not only here but across the state,” said Fenton Police Chief Rick Aro, who supports the legislation. “On a regular basis, we have people stealing things for scrap.”

According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, there were 25,083 claims of illegal metal scrapping from January 2009 to December 2011. More than 90 percent of the metal stolen was copper and 45 percent of the thefts happened to personal property.

Michigan ranked 10th nationally for thefts happening a lot and that it’s been happening a lot and that there really wasn’t anything for him to do except file a report,” Craine posted on the Time’s Facebook page. “I still have a catalytic converter was stolen last year when he left his car at the Holly Park and Ride located on Silver Lake Road in Holly Township.

Fellow Linden resident Amanda Knepfler also had a catalytic converter stolen when she left her Jeep at the park and ride located on Silver Lake Road in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do was report it missing and fork over a few bucks in Fenton. “All I could do 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Linden Mills Days met with success

Organizers, city leaders pleased with turnout, activities

By William Axford
axford@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792

Country music, carnival rides, a car show and exotic animals descended on Linden this weekend for the third annual Linden Mills Days. Organizers of the event said families embraced Linden and enjoyed the activities.

“I think it went really well. It was a success in my eyes,” said organizer Cyndi Roesner. “I saw so many happy families enjoying the time together and all that the Linden Mills Days had to offer.”

Rides from the Skerbeck Carnival filled the Linden Elementary School parking lot starting Thursday, where kids could ride tilt-a-whirls and a mini rollercoaster. Friday night attracted country music fans as singers from all around Genesee County competed in the Texaco Country Music Showdown, followed by fireworks in the evening.

Saturday had more live entertainment and a First-Try Triathlon, specifically designed for first time triathlon athletes. Linden Mills Days concluded with a classic car show on Sunday, along with a pancake breakfast at the Linden fire station.

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News briefs

PERMITS TO INCREASE IN PRICE

Some permits in Linden are set to increase in price. At Monday’s Linden City Council meeting, City Manager Paul Zelenak presented a new set of prices to the city council, which was drafted by Building Official Jason Payne. A permit for a porch or a deck increased from $50 to $75; a demolition permit increased from $50 to $100, and permits for sheds more than 200-square-feet and pole barns increased from $50 to $75.

RUN FOR HOPE

Hope Lutheran Church in Linden will be holding a Run for Hope event on July 20. Proceeds from this event will fund college scholarships for local high school students. The event will begin and end at Hope Lutheran Church, located at 7355 Silver Lake Road.

DOWNTOWN LIGHTING IN LINDEN

Linden city officials are testing out new lights downtown and are looking for feedback from the community. The new light and globe are located in front of Linden Mercantile. City officials are encouraging residents to comment through the city’s Facebook page and email, specifically on the light’s design, intensity and overall look for downtown.

TRI-COUNTY TIMES | WILLIAM AXFORD

Children enjoy carnival rides during Linden Mills Days.

Organizers of the event clashed with the city council over approval for an entertainment tent during the planning stages of the event. However, after adjusting the entertainment tent’s hours and having it placed on private property instead of city property, organizers were allowed to serve alcohol, in addition to hosting live music. Overall, Roesner estimates more than a thousand people came to Linden during the weekend.

At Monday’s city council meeting, Councilor Ray Culbert praised city staff who were involved with the event.

“I saw a lot of our guys and gals out in the streets. I think we forget sometimes that’s part of the city’s contribution to the event,” Culbert said. “It was better than I expected.”
A MSP trooper gears up for the standoff in Fenton on Sunday. Onlookers saw assault rifles, tasers, armored vests, vehicles and camouflage uniforms in response to the barricaded man.

STANDOFF
Continued from Front Page

The situation began around 3 p.m. Sunday. Police responded to a welfare check for the man living in the upstairs of an apartment home. When police went in and out their front door, as they were trapped inside during the standoff.

Some witnesses were surprised at the show of force by police. “In order to do it right, it takes some people,” said Aro.

The sheer number of officers was needed to maintain the perimeters to keep the public safe, he said. The “long guns” were appropriate for the assignment, he said. He added that no one was hurt, including the accused, so the operation was successful.

Aro said it has been a couple years since this type of situation happened in Fenton, and he applauded Lt. Slater’s handling of it.

PLAN
Continued from Front Page

a guideline design standard for the downtown district and putting together a development plan into place,” said DDA director and assistant city manager Michael Burns.

This master plan can be seen by going to the website of the DDA. It’s going to work together to try and moving forward with the plan.

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AUTO-OWNERS INSURANCE

PAW
Continued from Page 3

The family in the home next door to the barricaded man.

Aro said Lt. Jason Slater called the state police in because they have tactical knowledge in handling barricade situations, and state police are obligated to send a minimum number of troopers to barricade situations.

An onlooker said that around 4 p.m., police knocked in the upstairs air conditioning unit in order to speak with the man. Police spoke to him through the window, training weapons on him when he appeared.

The family in the home next door opened their home to police who were in and out their front door, as they were trapped inside during the standoff.

Some witnesses were surprised at the show of force by police. “In order to do it right, it takes some people,” said Aro.

The sheer number of officers was needed to maintain the perimeters to keep the public safe, he said. The “long guns” were appropriate for the assignment, he said. He added that no one was hurt, including the accused, so the operation was successful.

Aro said it has been a couple years since this type of situation happened in Fenton, and he applauded Lt. Slater’s handling of it.

Therapy animals have demonstrated several different health benefits. Their use in hospitals has helped to reduce stress and anxiety in patients, resulting in lower blood pressure. Interacting with the trained canines has also been shown to bring happiness, increasing levels of endorphin and oxytocin in the body which can in turn make patients healthier.

Not all dogs at hospitals are volunteers. Michigan’s first hospital-owned therapy dog is a black lab named Henry, and he works as a therapy animal for the Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital — he even has his own employee badge.

“The major product that was in that plan is the core of Fenton and the identity while strengthening the community,” Burns said. “In addition to that opportunities come up,” Burns said. According to Burns, everything the DDA has done since he first arrived in 2009 has been a part of the city’s master plan.

Some projects just cannot be done until the right circumstances present themselves — and then it is up to the DDA to seize those opportunities. Renovation of the old Topps Fruit Market site, the greenery, and further development along the southeast corner of Silver Lake Road and LeRoy are all things the DDA could tackle in the future should things work out.

“It’s still a work in progress,” Burns said. “We haven’t completed everything we would like to do yet. It’s going to take several years to fully implement...”
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INSURANCE
Continued from Page 3

house of equal value will be built where the old one was destroyed. Smith is able to recover from the storm since she has replacement value insurance, a high level of insurance that protects homes and property after disasters.

“We try to sell replacement value insurance to everyone. It’s really what you want to have,” Hathaway said. “There are homes that don’t qualify for it because of condition or market value. But for the bulk of homes in our area, most will qualify for guaranteed replacement policies.”

Along with the rental home, Hathaway said Smith has received rental furniture, dishes and other amenities to return her home life to as normal as possible.

While construction costs could be significantly higher for a home that was built 20 or 30 years ago, Hathaway said guaranteed replacement value insurance will help cover the increased costs. The insurance rate is based upon the size of the value of the home. If new additions are added to a home but the insurance company is not notified about it, those additions may not qualify for the insurance.

“It’s important if you’re remodeling or making any additions that you notify your carrier so you don’t void it,” Hathaway said.

Skimping on home insurance would have devastated Smith. Hathaway estimates there’s $190,000 in damage to her home alone. The total price of the damages is expected to increase as Hathaway and Smith continue to take an inventory of destroyed items. Not all items may be recovered from a damaged site alone so Hathaway recommends homeowners archive as many of their items possible with photographs. That way, homeowners have proof of ownership, even if the item cannot be recovered after a disaster.

For homeowners who cannot afford or qualify for guaranteed replacement coverage, Hathaway said there are other insurance options such as increased cost insurance and straight replacement value insurance. To go without any type of insurance on your home or items could lead to financial ruin if a homeowner is struck by disaster. A local agent may be more beneficial as well.

“For a person buying insurance, they really should consider having somebody that’s local,” Hathaway said. “It certainly is rewarding for us to go out and spend the time we did with the Smiths. If you didn’t have a local person, it’d be hard to recover after a disaster.”

Homeowner’s insurance helps protect homeowners and can even replace destroyed items.

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TRI-COUNTY TIMES • FILE PHOTO

Homerow’s insurance helps protect homeowners and can even replace destroyed items.

Homeowner’s insurance helps protect homeowners and can even replace destroyed items.

Homeowner’s insurance helps protect homeowners and can even replace destroyed items.
First-Try Triathlon expands with competitive race

More than 300 people swam, bicycled and ran for the glory of saying they completed a triathlon

By Olivia Dimmer
news@tctimes.com

Linden — A colorful sea of swim caps sprawled out on the shores of Clover Beach this past Saturday morning all in preparation for the triathlon that was to come. Some participants came for the First-Try — a non-competitive triathlon for newbies, and others came for the Fast-Try — a triathlon that awarded medals based on placement in the event.

Once First-Try triathlon creator Dan Skinner blew the horn on his megaphone, swimmers dove into the water and swam for 300 yards. Once they were out of the water, many shed their wetsuits and leaped up the stone steps to the bike racks, mounted their bikes and took off for a 9.1-mile ride through Linden. Once off the bikes, athletes swapped helmets for running shoes and ran through two miles of trail to the finish line, where fruit, water and applause awaited them.

Derrick Fries was the first to conquer the Fast-Try Triathlon with a time of 44:30.

“It feels great to take first place,” said Fries, a 60-year-old from Clarkston, “I train year-round for this. This will be my fifth event this year.”

Although the First-Try is in its second year, the Fast-Try was added to give competitive triathletes an event as well. The First-Try Triathlon was specifically designed for inexperienced athletes to participate in a non-competitive and non-intimidating environment. Everyone in First-Try receives a medal, and no one comes in last; First-Try designated a ‘lantern rouge’ to cross the finish line last. Fast-Try Triathletes received medals based on age group.

“Myself and Paul, the co-creator of the event were on a bike ride once and I always thought [Clover Beach] would be a great place for a triathlon,” Skinner said. “I created this for first-timers to do something not as intimidating and a little smaller that they can handle, just to get people involved in the sport.”

Men and women of all ages participated in the triathlon, including 55-year-old Lake Fenton resident Lisa Veneziano.

“It feels great to be across that line,” Veneziano said. “Triathlons are a struggle for me. I’m just not a swimmer. I made it through the swim, and I was looking forward to the bike and the run.”

First- and Fast-Try Triathlons took care to make the event as safe as possible, especially the swim for new triathletes. Canoes with lifeguards were placed every 100 yards. In addition, the chairs at Clover beach were swept and cleared of debris. The sand was also raked for swimmers running to the bike rack. With hundreds of triathletes, safety has become a main priority.

“We started out to cap [participants] at 200. Now we have about 300. The Fast-Try allows people to graduate from the First-Try. The First-Try is all about ‘can you do it?’ and then they can start competing. I think that is why it is growing,” Skinner said.

“People think they can’t do it. But they can. If they just come out and do it, they become a triathlete. And that is something to brag about.”
Families keep the Wednesday Night Races tradition alive

By David Troppens
droppens@tctimes.com; 810-433-6789

Linden — It appears running is in Evan Fahrenkopf’s blood. While the Linden resident is only 5, he did a little double-duty at the Wednesday Night Races held at Linden County Park.

First, he ran the 800-meter course in a time of 6:02. But not satisfied with just one event, he took on the mile only minutes later, posting a time, with his dad, Chris Fahrenkopf, running with him in a time of 12:05.

“I love running with him and keeping him motivated,” Chris Fahrenkopf said. “Last year I ran more with (older sister) Ava. It’s great. I like that he likes it, too.”

As mentioned, Evan wasn’t the only Fahrenkopf at the event. His older sister Ava, 7, also ran the two races Evan ran. Older brother Nolan, 9, ran the half-mile and mile during the first session of the annual Wednesday Night Races. The races are designed to give runners from four to 80 a chance to run a cross country event that is properly designed for their age and ability. The races vary from an 800-meter run for the youngsters right on up to a two-mile and a three-mile competition open for anyone who feel capable of competing at that level. During Wednesday’s first event, there were runners as young as 4 to as old as 53.

“I think it’s great,” Chris Fahrenkopf said. “It’s a great chance of us to bond as a family, and it keeps us in shape. It’s fun. We all enjoy doing the run and we have a lot of friends participating as well. It’s good to get all the kids together outside versus inside on a computer or something.”

The Wednesday Night Races are held every Wednesday until July 24, with the exception of July 3. The first races, which are the shorter events for the younger kids, begin at 6:45 p.m. Following are the one-mile, the two-mile and then the three-mile runs. The three-mile event is scheduled to begin at 7:40 p.m. The Wednesday Night Races must qualify as one of the greatest bargains in running in the tri-county area, costing just $2 an event, or $5 for a family. Times are kept, making it possible to chart one’s progress during the course of the season. And the event has become a hit with families, frequently children and parents taking their turns competing in races.

There are always rookies during the first event of the year. Sheila Nowak brought her son, Devin, 7, for the first time this year. It was apparent Devin loved competing. He ran in the one-mile run, posting a time of 7:46. “This was our very first race. He read it in the paper and he said he wanted to do that,” Nowak said. “He was really excited about it.

“He’s doing the mileage club at Linden schools and he’s got really interested in it this year.”

As the years go on, one does recognize certain faces who come out annually. The races are aided by the Linden boys and girls cross country teams. Both squads were Metro League champions and regional champions. The boys finished second in the state a year ago. Students help by running the shorter races with the younger children, so they don’t get lost and remain encouraged to finish races. They also help with the timing, the placing and awarding of ribbons. Every participant gets a ribbon at the end of the day. Some of today’s cross country runners in the Linden program began as youth running at the Wednesday Night Cross Country Races. And while over the years the runners have been primarily from Linden or Fenton, the competition is open to anyone who wants to come. There were runners from Swartz Creek, Durand and Lapeer during the event’s first week.

“There’s no doubt Devin Nowak will be back. “Oh yeah, he’s going to have it on his calendar every Wednesday,” Sheila Nowak said. “I like that it’s $2. It’s affordable. They definitely have a lot of space for it and it can definitely hold a lot more people. They have it set up nice and it’s well organized. It’s good for their first runs too.”

Rooker’s ski career continuing at Florida Southern College

By Torrey Christopher
droppens@tctimes.com; 810-433-6789

With help from her dad, Fenton senior Amy Rooker began waterskiing at a young age.

“I started skiing because my dad does,” Rooker said. “I’ve always grown up around the sport so naturally he taught me how to ski, too. As I got older I realized waterskiing competitively was something I wanted to pursue.”

Now Rooker has earned herself a spot on Florida Southern College’s water ski team.

“I chose Florida Southern because I feel it’s the perfect place for me academically and competitively,” Rooker said. “They de nitely hold.

The women’s ski team took first place in October’s National Collegiate Water Ski Championship, with the men and women combining to finish third overall. The water ski teams compete in three events during a meet — slalom, jumping and tricks.

Although she didn’t receive a scholarship for skiing, Rooker earned $21,500 a year for her academics. She was a co-valedictorian of her class and competed in many other sports throughout her career, including volleyball and track.

“I knew that in order to be able to afford going to school at Florida Southern I would have to receive scholarships,” Rooker said. “It was really rewarding to receive academic scholarships and be valedictorian because all the work I put in during high school paid off.”

Rooker currently competes on her own; however there is a group of people she usually practices with. One of those people is her father, whom she attributes her success to.

“I attribute my success to my dad and ski partner Mark Johnson,” Rooker said. “They are always there at every practice. My dad pays for all my equipment, gasoline for the boat, club membership fees and tournament entry fees. Also the waterskiing community that I practice and compete with, everyone is so supportive and encouraging.”
Wednesday Sudoku

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row, each column and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

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