Fenton and Linden schools have one of the highest fail rates
By Yvonne Stegall
ysnegali@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792

Of 129 local school buses, 67 received a passing grade in the state’s school bus inspection results from a total of four inspections completed between Sept. 1, 2013, and Aug. 31, 2014, according to the Michigan State Police’s Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division’s annual report.

Fenton and Linden schools fell into some of the highest rates of failed inspections. Linden Community Schools had 23 of 33 buses receive a red grade and Fenton Area Public Schools had 20 of 44 buses in the red. Red means they need to fix all issues immediately after inspection.

A Dicken’s of a festival

More than 1,000 visitors fill downtown Holly during the 2014 Holly Dickens Festival kick-off last weekend. The event was a huge success, and included a lighted parade, the Holly High School Marching Band, a tree-lighting ceremony — and of course, a visit from Santa Claus. The festival continues this weekend and next, with different activities for each.

Prices at the pump drop below $2 in Oklahoma
Could it happen here?
By Yvonne Stegall
ysnegali@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792

A quick conversation with Doug Smith at Smitty’s Exit 80 would make you believe it’s definitely a possibility. “It could happen,” he said. In fact, he said Monday night it already dropped 13 cents.

According to recent reports, last week, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreed to cut its production. OPEC cuts will stabilize oil prices. According to the American Automobile Association, Michigan’s average price for a gallon of regular gas was $2.14 per gallon.

Health insurance co-pays vary wildly
State, auto industry employees pay least, private industry the most
By Tim Jagielo
tjagielo@tctimes.com; 810-433-6795

It’s open enrollment time for the Affordable Care Act (ACA). So for some, their insurance rates will soon be up in the air. The rates for some will increase, while others may get a better deal.

Of course, if your workplace offers insurance, it will change as well — but your rate may depend on your profession.

Would someone, anyone, please share with me any benefit to any American citizen that giving amnesty to five million illegal immigrants will provide?”

“People are seeing the need for action on immigration reform right now.”

“Yes, I can name all 50 states. Why? I went to North Road School 27 years ago, I learned how to sing the states in alphabetical order in less than 1 minute. It was either Mrs. Bruder or Mrs. Toonder.”

“Deporting all illegal immigrants is a terrible idea. That would mean Joe Biden would be our president.”

“The message of Ferguson, Missouri is that race relations in America are deteriorating, not improving. Both whites and blacks are equally responsible. I am black and work in Fenton, nobody treats me any different than what I am — an American.”

Fenton — On Wednesday, business owners and stakeholders got a glimpse of what downtown Fenton will look like next year when they examined new composite images of downtown Fenton in the city council chambers. The satellite image of the street was overlaid with what the street See STREETSCAPE on 8A

TRI-COUNTY TIMES | TIM JAGIELO

The 30 or so meeting attendants got a closer look at artistic renderings of the new trees, to be planted for the Streetscape project. The trees will be planted to create an intentional pattern of color.

TRI-COUNTY TIMES | TIM JAGIELO

Streetscape project gets a green light
Downtown project to break ground in spring 2015
By Tim Jagielo
tjagielo@tctimes.com; 810-433-6795

TRI-COUNTY TIMES | TIM JAGIELO

The message of Ferguson, Missouri is that race relations in America are deteriorating, not improving. Both whites and blacks are equally responsible. I am black and work in Fenton, nobody treats me any different than what I am — an American.”
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This week, two more of the four businesses in the new Cornerstone building opened. The Rough Draught served its first drinks last week.

“Food with drama” is a fitting tagline for Sagano Japanese Bistro and Steakhouse. On Thursday these diners experienced the first night the restaurant was open for business in Fenton.

In early November, Gordon Jamison of Jamison Construction attaches ornamental stone to the entrance wall of what will be the Diamond Room at Sawyer Jewelers. The business opted to open in January in order to best serve their customers during this holiday season.

Salon 416 hairstylist Collette Spring does a balayage coloring for a client on Thursday. “We’ve been swamped,” she said.
Don’t hate them, pity them

Well, my favorite day of the year has come and gone. I am speaking, of course, of the Thanksgiving Day celebration where we give thanks for our many blessings. It’s a wonderful day when families and friends gather together to celebrate the good fortune in their life with wonderful food, friends and family. There is a sense of tradition ingrained in the day that prevents even the wackiest of us from trying to stain the day by launching a diatribe against killing plum, tasty birds or giving thanks to God for our blessings. There is an aura about the day that most of us find reassuring — primarily because it has remained unchanged since we were children. I must have said ‘have a great Thanks-
giving’ to a hundred friends, acquaintances and associates over the last couple of years. And they returned the same sentiment to me. No one admonished me for bird cruelty, or the glutony of an overflowing dinner table, or for watching football. It was, and always is, a wonderful and uniquely American day of celebration.

However, we now enter the slippery slope of the Christmas season — a season that is accompanied by apprehension for many — due to the agenda of a few. It doesn’t seem to matter that for the vast majority of American citizens Christmas, at its core, is a celebration of the birth of Jesus. The many, have allowed a few, to denigrate a benchmark of faith that — until about 20 years ago — actually was ‘the most wonderful time of the year.’

Many of us are now troubled — but not overly — by this attempted tempering of the celebration of the birth of Jesus. I, for one, wonder what the endgame of those responsible is. When you consider the enormous efforts that have been expended to denounce Christmas, what could possibly be their motivation? Do they really believe that doing away with Christmas trees, Nativity scenes, Rudolph, eggnog, mistletoe and giving gifts to people you love will be beneficial to America? Well, the eggnog maybe — hard to argue with that.

The only possible explanation is that these individuals hate many of the things that make most of us happy: smiling children, church pews filled with families, decorated Christmas trees, colorful stockings hung with chimney care and manger scenes in front yards. They should be pitied, not hated. They are missing one of life’s great joys — the timeless magic of the Christmas season.

Besides, any Christian knows that Christmas is not about displays in malls, it is about a spiritual event that we celebrate with our families and in our homes.

So, Merry Christmas fellow Christians, and Happy Holidays to the rest of you.

There. The war on Christmas is now officially ended.

Opinions offered in If I Were King are the author’s alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Tri-County Times or its staff. Email the King at king@times.com. Some content adapted from the internet.

How has your health insurance changed over the last two years?

“I have VA so I don’t have to mess with any of the companies.” — Richard Pratt, Holly Township

“I pay more for prescriptions. My husband had Alzheimer’s and it cost a lot to keep him in the nursing home.” — Caroline Burke, Fenton

“I originally had Blue Cross/Blue Shield. It became too expensive with the price of the increase.” — Steve Berman, Linden

“Some prescriptions cost more and it’s harder for a retired person on a fixed income.” — Patricia Flick, Fenton

“My girlfriend got on the extended Medicaid, so she went from none to having some.” — Joshua Kirchener, Grand Blanc

“The prices have gone up. They raise it every half-year.” — John Locke, Linden

“Do they really believe that doing away with Christmas trees, Nativity scenes, Rudolph, eggnog, mistletoe and giving gifts to people you love will be beneficial to America?”

IF YOU THINK Obama created laws with the illegal immigration executive order, then it just shows how you are ignorant on the subject and/or you like Fox News. Wouldn’t you rather not look stupid when your opinion is published?

SHAME ON THE girl who put a shoe in the locker room toilet after swim lessons ended at 8 p.m. at FHS Wednesday. That shoe belonged to a very nice elderly lady who certainly didn’t deserve it. What an awful thing to do.

IT’S BEGINNING TO look like Christmas. Just drove through Fenton last night and love the lighted and decorated light poles. It looks great!

THE POLICE KEEP us safe. Ninety-nine percent are wonderful. Be careful with the broad brush of judgment. There could come a time when they decide they no longer wish to risk their lives for an ungrateful public. Thank you police officers, you are appreciated.

THANK YOU EVER YONE who helped carry on Nancy Stockham’s tradition of providing a Thanksgiving basket to those in need in our community. It was a great day.

OBAMA INVITES AL Sharpton to the White House as an advisor. If Sharpton owes $.45 million in back taxes.

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Maryann McConnell Pre-Planning Specialist

COMING TO THE front page of my southern liberal paper featured a picture of the national tree in Washington. It’s beautiful. How would you feel if people substituted, “My opinion is that doing away with Christmas trees, Nativity scenes, Rudolph, eggnog, mistletoe and giving gifts to people you love will be beneficial to America?”

A C R INUNAL IS a criminal and when he tries to beat up a police officer and grab the officer’s gun and he gets shot, that’s not unreasonable. They shouldn’t even bring in that he’s black, he’s a criminal.

See HOT LINE throughout Times
Animal advocates file lawsuit to freeze funds

By Yvonne Stegall; 810-433-6792
ystegall@tctimes.com

The group GRACE, Genesee County Residents for Animal Control Evolution, filed a lawsuit on Wednesday, Dec. 3 against county commissioners Ted Henry and Pegge Adams, and the Genesee County Board of Commissioners for violation of the Open Meetings Act.

After the November election, new reportedly animal-friendly commissioners were voted onto the board, but they don’t take their seats until January. In the meantime, some of the current commissioners are pushing to put in place a proposal for the $1.7 million millage that was passed last month. This push has animal activists in Genesee County up in arms.

According to GRACE’s post after the last meeting on Wednesday, “They first brought it up at the board meeting immediately following the election. The Board instructed them to go back to the Animal Control Advisory Committee to work with that group to devise a comprehensive plan.”

The plan they came back with was put together by Animal Control Director Stepheni Lazar. Known as animal-friendly commissioners, Jamie Curtis, Mark Young and Tony Brown argued against the plan. Because not all of the committee members had been considered when the plan was devised, and had not contributed to it at all, the plan was not well received at that time.

GRACE’s Facebook page stated, “For much of the past two years, Henry and Adams have been able to secure support from at least three other commissioners. This allowed them to have a majority of votes to block any proposals for improvements at GCAC that Curtis, Young or Brown would bring forward. However, because informed voters supported animal-friendly commissioners candidates in this year’s elections, we are looking forward to January when a fair and more compassionate Board will take over. We think Henry and Adams expect that too, which is why they are pushing so hard to get their agenda approved before year end.”

GRACE’s lawsuit stems from the claim that Henry and Adams scheduled a meeting with the Animal Control Ad-
INSURANCE
Continued from Front Page
The Times has compiled what people in different professions might contribute monthly for insurance, but if you’re curious as to what your insurance might cost if you enrolled today, WebMD has a handy calculator, based on the middle, “Silver” package of the ACA.

For example, this reporter, under that package would pay $209 per month, with a maximum annual premium of $2,512 under the “Silver” plan. Getting a more accurate or possibly cheaper rate requires more detailed information submitted.

Another reporter at the office, with the family plan, pays about $1,400 per month in premiums to cover them, their spouse and 19-year-old dependent. In addition to this, they have a $3,500 deductible, which must be met before insurance coverage kicks in.

Anyone basically on their own or operating a business would be in the same boat, checking in on an independent insurance policy on the marketplace.

For a family of four, with an income of $65,000, and the oldest person in the family at 45, the rate could be $477 per month, but the website advises that a subsidy might be possible.

So what do local professionals contribute to their insurance?

Asking about an “average” payment for someone in a particular profession locally is still a big question, with lots of variables.

Linden Community Schools Assistant Superintendent Michael Engelter attempted to answer just that for an average teacher in LCS. He used an example teacher with full family coverage with a $200 annual deductible.

With a small deductible plan, the monthly cost for health insurance is $1,687.92. He said that PA152 places a cap on the amount the district can contribute toward an employee’s health insurance premium. He said that the monthly cap amount LCS can contribute is $1,331.27, which leaves the employee to pay the difference each month of $356.65.

At the city of Fenton, employees insured under the city pay 20 percent of their monthly insurance fee. Clerk Renee Wilson gave examples of a single person, a couple and a family. These employees include police (public safety), public works, and office staff.

For a single person’s HMO, the fee would be 20 percent of $527.92, or $105.60 per month. An employee insuring a couple would pay $242.84. An employee covering a family pays $285.

Wilson said insurance plans and rates change each year, with a 5-percent increase in 2014. “We are constantly looking at our options in an effort to control costs and still provide a quality plan,” she said.

From administrative staff to the State Police, the State of Michigan also pays 80 percent of the State Health Plan PPO, and employees pay 20 percent. For a single person, they might pay $123.60 a month, while the state contributes the rest. For a family, the employee would pay about $341.

Members of the State House of Representatives and employees are under the same health insurance, and also contribute 20 percent of the cost. They can also participate in a health savings account. State reps and their staff pay $109 per month for a single person, $254 for a couple and $328 for family coverage, for plan, “Community Blue PPO #1.”

Fred Wright, benefits representative for UAW Local 598, said that GM UAW employees do not have a monthly premium. “Entry-level” employees will pay approximately $1,000 in deductibles as they use the benefits. Long-time employees have to contribute to health benefits.

Retired UAW employees who opt for coverage will pay either $17 for a single person out of their pension check, or $34 for a family.
Firearm sales at all-time high

By Yvonne Stegall ystegall@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792

According to FBI reports, Black Friday this year set an all-time record high for firearm sales. There were 175,000 background checks conducted on Nov. 28, throughout the U.S. The entire month saw a boom in sales, and the FBI ran nearly two million background checks throughout the month.

While Christmas is part of the upswing in gun sales, with many people buying their child’s first gun for hunting or their own new rifle, gift-giving and the holidays isn’t the only reason sales have risen.

According to one NBC affiliate station, studies show that when people are afraid, ‘gun veterans’ as well as new users, will stock up. With the nation’s fear after seeing the violent riots in Ferguson, Missouri, increased sales were likely an expected response.

Most gun advocates will tell you that even in an open carry state like Michigan you need to get your concealed pistol license (CPL). Concealing your weapon allows you to not put fear in people you are around and it also allows you to not show the “bad” guy that you are armed.

Upon completion of the approved course, a certificate will be issued and the student will take that and two passport photos to the county clerk’s office in the county they reside. There, they will have a quick fingerprinting and background check for disqualifying felonies. Several weeks later, the applicant will either be told to come back to the clerk’s office to pick up their license or it will be mailed to them. The application fee is $125.

While there are a few options out there for CPL classes, locally and throughout Genesee County, Personal Defense Services offers a local solution. Brett Selby has been a police officer for 23 years and is currently a police lieutenant and shift commander in the patrol division. He has been teaching CPL classes for the past 10 years and a firearms instructor at The Oakland Police Academy. “I accept only small classes to give individual attention and never turn a student away for their skill level,” said Selby.

In Genesee County, there’s a one-in-13 chance a person has a concealed weapon permit.

According to data compiled from police reports and U.S. Census estimates, 7.75 out of every 100 adults in Genesee County who are eligible to carry a concealed pistol have a CPL. This is in contrast to stats showing that statewide, one in 16 adults has a CPL.

CPL class basics
• Take a National Rifle Association (NRA) approved Personal Protection in the Home course with a certified instructor.
• The course is a one-day class that should include an in-depth program regarding individuals’ responsibilities of using and storing a firearm in the home.
• The second part of the course should include an extensive legal brief by a law enforcement officer or attorney who has advanced training in personal protection and gun law knowledge.
• The third part would include a comprehensive test of the material.
• Quality on the range with at least 30 rounds of ammunition.

Source: Lt. Brett Selby of Personal Defense Service LLC

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Christmas Eve Service
Wednesday at 7:00 pm
The project has been in the works since 2011, when conceptual drawings were made. When completed, the streetscape will alter the streets, curbs, sidewalks and lighting of the downtown, from Second Street to Elizabeth Street.

The $4.8 million project was first delayed in 2012, when the city decided to wait for $1.7 million in federal funds. In the fall of 2013, City Manager Lynn Markland and Assistant City Manager Mike Burns submitted paperwork for the grants with the expectation of it all being wrapped up that winter, and allowing bidding and construction to begin. The October 2013 federal government shut-down and MDOT caused delays in the obligating of the funds. Now, funds have been secured and construction can begin in spring 2015.

The Streetscape project was paid for with bonds, the first payment being sent out next year. Burns said the city also locked in a lower interest rate, saving $140,000 over the life of the 20-year bond.

Business owners were treated to a digital video rendering showing what the trees downtown will look like, prompting some concerns over blocked storefronts and messy falling leaves. Landscape Architect Vanessa Warren with OHM Advisors, Inc. answered concerns and explained the different species.

The group also talked about snow removal, sidewalk drainage, and how traffic volume will stay the same, but be slowed as downtown becomes more pedestrian friendly.

The plans Burns laid out were similar to last year, and many of the very specific details and the exact timeline will be fleshed out over the winter, with a final detailed meeting in the spring before ground is broken.

The heavy-duty work is expected to begin in late March, weather permitting, and end in the late fall. Some work will have to be completed spring 2016, but most will be done in 2015.

Burns did offer some traffic insights while a new storm sewer is put in.

During the bulk of the project, South Leroi Street will be open northbound only. Shiawassee Avenue near downtown will only be eastbound. All other roads will be open as usual, and Mill Street will be two-way once again.
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**Macho Man**
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**Carrington**
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**Sugar Daddy**
I'm a six month Lab learning what being a pup is all about.

**Ernie**
I'm a six month old boy, who loves to play with my brother Bert. Reunions are less as social.

**Cocoa**
This boxer blend is a true catch!

**Bulwinkle**
I'm a shy guy who would love to have access to lots of toys and daily clothes.

**Dee Dee**
I'm a gorgeous senior girl.

**Jammie**
Happy go lucky Jammie is under a year and only 10 lbs.

**Saunter**
I was born at AAP, I'm the last of my litter. I need a home with someone home a lot.

**Picadilly**
Picadilly is a young 5 month old Coonhound.

**Mamasan**
I'm a beautiful girl, who is under three. I want a home for the holidays.

**Veronica**
Veronica is a special needs Shih Tzu with so much love to give.

**Charis**
I'm 6 months old and just the sweetest girl. I love affection and I'm very affectionate.

**Batman**
I'm a tiny boy who needs a quiet home with someone at home a lot.
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- #10 envelopes
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- **Carrie**
  - I’m a sweet, affectionate girl, who has a condition that makes me wobble when I walk.
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- **Otis**
  - Otis is a shy guy at first but a love bug in no time.
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- **Kelly**
  - I’m shy and a bit nervous, but when I trust you, I become all snuggles and love.
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  - **Wag & Purr**
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- **Hank**
  - I’m a BIG boy who needs to be the only animal in the home.
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- **Mama Kat**
  - I always look like I’m winking, because I only have one eye. I’m very petite and sweet!
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  - **Little Caesars**
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- **Pop Rocks**
  - I’m a six month Lab blend just looking for love.
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- **Smiley**
  - I’m a gorgeous girl with a personality to match! Will I be your furry friend?
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  - I’m a big guy with a big heart. I want to spend the holidays with you - in my new home.
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- **Donny**
  - I’m about 7 years old and a typical Lab.
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- **Amethyst**
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  - Look into my eyes and feel the love. I’d like your home to be my home.
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- **Emmy**
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- **Lucky**
  - Lucky has been with us for a long time and needs someone to give her a chance.
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- **Jessie**
  - I’m particular about my feline friends. I would do best if I was an only child.
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**inBusiness**

**Belle Jackson Therapeutic Massage**

Local massage therapist moves to new office

Belle Jackson, BCTM, LMT, has moved her massage therapy practice to 14165 North Fenton Rd., Suite 104 in the North Towne Professional Center in Fenton Township. A certified massage therapist since 2006, Jackson’s new location brings her patients a more relaxed setting in a larger space, plus convenient parking. She has been in private practice since May 2013.

Jackson has created a unique niche in her practice by focusing on Myofascial Release to target chronic pain. She also performs cranial sacral massage, wellness lymphatic work and relaxation massage.

“Massage therapy is now thought to be one of the principal components in maintaining good health,” she said. “It’s also helpful for injuries. If you’ve been injured in an auto accident, you can now get massage therapy with a doctor’s prescription, and it will be covered by your insurance even without being associated with a chiropractic office.”

To make an appointment, call (810) 629-4575.

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**PRICES Continued from Front Page**

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) claimed its members will keep oil production at current levels. Many industry experts expected the cartel to slash production amid a deep slide in oil prices, which hit five-year lows following the announcement.

Smith said that he has heard and read that the lower prices are due to having so much oil in reserves and the demand is lower. “Now that the summer travel period is over it’s time for prices to begin dropping,” he said.

Even the current drops are enough to ease the cost of travel for Christmas shopping, giving us more money to spend on gifts instead of on our gas tanks.

According to reports by Fox News, about 12 percent of U.S. gas stations are already charging less than $2.50 a gallon. It is believed that more than a third of stations will be under $2.50 by Christmas.

According to Gas News, the average retail gasoline prices in Flint have risen 9.5 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging $2.87/g on Wednesday. These calculations are according to GasBuddy’s daily survey of 212 gas outlets in Flint.

This compares with the national average that has fallen 2.1 cents per gallon in the last week to $2.78/g.

Not only are prices dropping, prices Wednesday were 34.6 cents per gallon lower than the same day one year ago and are 3.8 cents per gallon lower than a month ago, in Flint. The national average has decreased 21.8 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 49.9 cents per gallon lower than this day one year ago.

Smith said, “It’s a good possibility gas prices will be down to $2 or less by Christmas.”

**It’s a good possibility gas prices will be down to $2 or less by Christmas...**

Doug Smith
Smitty’s Exit 80 owner

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People just might be smiling more at the pump this month as gasoline prices continue to drop.
SCHOOL BUSES
Continued from Front Page
have to be taken out of service and be fixed immediately.
Followed by six of 16 buses red flagged for Lake Fenton Community Schools, and one in Holly Area Schools.
A yellow tag bus can remain in service, but the items in question must be repaired within 60 days of the inspection.
Fenton Superintendent Tim Jalkanen said, “Each year the Michigan State Police inspect school buses across the state. Fenton schools have two full-time mechanics to maintain the fleet of 44 buses of Fenton schools and the Genesee Intermediate School District.”
Of the 20 buses that were red flagged at his school, Jalkanen said, “Several of the red tags on our buses were related to the seats. For example, the foam on seats needed to be replaced or a seat bolt broke during the inspection.”
“All of the red tag items were repaired and buses were back in service while the Michigan State Police officer was still in the district.”

Calendar of events
‘ALIVE IN APPALACHIA’ PREMIERS ON DEC. 10
The Fenton Film Series invites the community to its next ‘free’ movie night on Wednesday, Dec. 10 for the world premiere of ‘Alive in Appalachia.’ The new documentary from Tim Jagiello, a local filmmaker and associate editor at the Tri-County Times. The movie starts at 7 p.m. at the Fenton Community & Cultural Center.

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Patrick in the service department was very professional, friendly and thorough. -Betty W.

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Please present at write up. Expires 12-24-14. FPCTC

GOOD TIRE TIP
- Reduced thermal stresses by having uniform temperatures around your engine and radiator
- Improved cabin heater efficiency

We strive
Calendars of events
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Friday - Saturday - Sunday
December 12, 13, 14
5pm - 8pm

A 20 minute outdoor walk through the events that foretold and preceded Christ’s birth.

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Michael Maher Band to perform on Friday, December 12th

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1/4 mile west on the right.
(Look for Jesus Walk Sign and Parking Attendants.)
What’s Shake’n Burger Grille

Bigger! Better! Fresher is their motto

The burger is “what’s make’n” news at What’s Shake’n, Fenton’s newest hamburger eatery. “Every single burger is made to order,” said Dave Durant, who opened the restaurant June 18 with partners Jerry Heck and Jeff Rak. Together, they’ve stacked up 105 years in the burger and ice cream industry.

To get the best burger, What’s Shake’n starts with the freshest beef from Abbott’s Meats, always fresh and never frozen. Each burger is topped with local hand-cut vegetables and condiments for its signature style, and then “sandwiched” in between a soft, tender potato bun. For a sumptuous side dish, each burger is accompanied by house-made chips, unless fries, onion rings or other sides are requested.

“Our three most popular burgers are the Shake’n Classic, the Smokehouse Bacon Cheeseburger and the Shake’n ‘O’ (Olive) Burger,” said Heck, who heads day-to-day operations.

Uncle Ray’s hand-spun soft serve ice cream is “the cherry on top of the sundae” after a delicious burger meal, or as a treat on its own. “You can enjoy Uncle Ray’s most popular ice cream treats — from shakes to sundaes, turbo blasts and frozen chills right at this convenient Silver Parkway location,” said Durant, owner of the original Uncle Ray’s Dairyland on North LeRoy. “We do everything at What’s Shake’n the ‘Uncle Ray Way,’ creating an experience of fun, beyond the food.”

A drive-through is also available, with burgers and treats hand delivered to your car.

What’s Shake’n is located at 15155 Silver Parkway in Fenton, telephone (810) 354-8350.

By Sally Rummel • news@tctimes.com; 810-629-8282

What’s Shake’n partners Dave Durant (left) and Jerry Heck each take a huge bite from a 1/3-pound burger, while employee Mackenzie Winter shows off a real Uncle Ray’s strawberry shake topped with whipped cream and a cherry.
Griffins humbled by Davison

Squad shows improvement but loses 8-0 to Cardinals

By David Troppens
droppens@times.com

Hartland — It’s called the ever popular “eye test.”

For most of the first period, the Metro League Griffins (a co-op varsity hockey squad of players from Fenton and Linden schools) passed that eye test against the Davison Cardinals at Hartland Sports Center on Wednesday night.

In fact, for about the first seven minutes, the Griffins looked dominant, taking five of the game’s first six shots and keeping the puck in Davison’s defensive zone most of that time.

However, games are not won through the “eye test.” Despite playing well for the first 16 minutes of the first period, the Griffins had two moments in the first 17 minutes where they allowed two goals within seconds of each other, resulting in a 4-0 first-period deficit. After that first period, the

See GRIFFINS on 19A

XC teams dominate our Top 10

Three Linden squads among our final four

By David Troppens
droppens@times.com

Here’s a question we ask here a lot — exactly what sport is the tri-county area a hotbed for?

There are areas that seem to produce strong football teams, basketball squads, or baseball and softball programs. Prep fans love to debate stuff like this. So what is that sport in our tiny area?

Anyone who has followed these columns over the last five years should be able to figure out

See TOP 10 on 20A

Bronchos still winning

Third quarter leads Holly to 25th straight regular-season win

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

Hartland — The Holly varsity girls basketball team led 14-12 on the road at Hartland High School in its first game of the 2013-14 regular season. But the start of the second half didn’t go all too well. The Bronchos saw each of their first five possessions of the quarter end in turnovers, while Hartland surged to an 18-14 lead after Hartland’s Lexy Tobel converted two free throws right after Holly had called a time out.

Whatever was said by Holly coach David Hall during the time out worked. After those converted Hartland free throws, the Bronchos, led by

See BRONCHOS on 20A

Don’t put your life on our line.

This winter, prevent a senseless tragedy by steering clear of train tracks. Not only is riding a snowmobile on a railroad’s right of way illegal, but you may also be too focused on having a good time to hear a train coming.

Don’t put your life on our line.

all aboard for safety

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INSIDE SPORTS
FLEXING LIONS
Kickoff time has changed for Lions’ Dec. 14 game against the Vikings.
See Page 18A

TRIVIA
BASEBALL
Q
Who has been MLB’s youngest manager to start a season since 1900?
A
The Cleveland Indians hired Lou Boudreau as their manager on Nov. 25, 1941. He was 24.

DAD’S DABBLINGS
Last weekend was a good one for me in terms of college football. About a week ago, I made a quick comment about how the Southeastern Conference (SEC) was overrated. Conventional wisdom has also suggested the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) is an inferior football league, meaning Florida State isn’t a worthy No. 1 because of the poor opposition they face in the ACC.

Look at what happened Thanksgiving weekend, though. The ACC and SEC faced off in four games during that period. Guess who won all four games? The ACC teams did.

Now I’m not a Florida State fan at all. In fact, I typically root against them. However, arguing they don’t deserve to be No. 1 because they are in the ACC makes little sense. And while I’m at it, neither does penalizing an undefeated team for ‘barely winning’ games. There is no way the Seminoles should be No. 4 in the most recent college playoff poll. The Seminoles, and the ACC, proved they are a legit conference, and certainly on par with the overrated SEC.
NFL’s flex scheduling has moved game to 4:25 p.m. By David Troppens dtroppens@tctimes.com; 810-433-6789

For those Detroit Lions’ fans who are holding a ticket to Detroit’s home game against the Minnesota Vikings on Dec. 14, you may want to disregard the 1 p.m. kickoff time your ticket states.

That’s because the game has become a victim of the National Football League’s flex scheduling program. The game’s kickoff at Ford Field is now scheduled for 4:25 p.m. instead.

Flex scheduling begins each Sunday during the fifth week of the NFL season and continues through the final regular season week. The goal of flex scheduling, or changing the time of a Sunday contest to a different time on that same date, is done for a variety of reasons. The primary goal is to get some of the most desired contests on Sundays scheduled with the latest prime time audience. In most cases that would involve moving to NBC’s Sunday Night contest.

However, with the Vikings at Lions’ game this wasn’t the reason it was moved. First, the game was moved from 1 p.m. until 4:15 p.m., the same time that FOX Sports has the San Francisco 49ers at Seattle Seahawks slated. Chances are, most of the nation will get that game during FOX’s Sunday 1 p.m./4 p.m. doubleheader of NFL games.

Contests are also flexed between CBS and FOX in order to assure teams get a proper balance of games to broadcast each Sunday afternoon.

Initially, CBS had eight games scheduled on the AFC package of contests, while FOX had just five with NFL teams. To balance the schedules, FOX was given the Cincinnati Bengals at Cleveland Browns game to change the differential to 7-6. The Bengals and Browns are scheduled for 1 p.m., so the Lions’ home game was moved to 4:15 p.m. With the Bengals and Browns in the thick of the AFC playoff race, and with Cleveland’s high-profile rookie quarterback Johnny Manziel pushing current starter Brian Hoyer for the starting position, chances are FOX’s national game at 1 p.m. will be the Bengals and Browns.

It made sense to move the Vikings and Lions to 4:15 p.m. to enhance the viewership of the 1 p.m. contest while giving FOX a second game for the 4:15 p.m. slot.

There has been talk about flexing other Lions’ games. It was thought the Lions’ Week #12 matchup with the New England Patriots would be flexed to the Sunday Night game. It wasn’t. Don’t be shocked if the Lions’ trip to Green Bay on Dec. 28 is eventually flexed to the Sunday night (8:25 p.m.) contest since there’s a good chance the game could determine the winner of the NFC Central Division. Currently, the game is scheduled for 1 p.m.

During most NFL weeks, games which have their game times changed will be done 12 days in advance. However, during Week #17 (the final week of the regular season) changes can be made with as little as six days notice. So the decision on that game won’t be made until Dec. 22.

Blue Devils’ offense looks strong vs. Atherton, 62-28

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

Lake Fenton’s first-year varsity girls basketball coach Brian VanBuren said he thought he may see great improvement from the first game to his team’s second contest of the season.

He was right. The Blue Devils played a complete 32 minutes against Atherton, ending a 62-28 victory on Thursday night.

“We played well. We rebounded, shared the ball and were in the right spots defensively. We seemed to be a step slow on Monday and maybe it was the development from Monday to this game. A lot of time from the first game to the second game you see great improvement.”

Sophomore Sierra Arroyo helped set the tone for the Blue Devils, beginning the game with two three-pointers. She ended up finishing with five three and a team-high 19 points.

Lake Fenton (1-1) won every quarter, taking an 11-8 lead after one period and a 27-16 lead into halftime. Perhaps one of the most satisfying portions of the game was when the Blue Devils’ bench, sparked by freshman Cameron Williams, came out for about the final five minutes of the game and helped spark a 24-2 fourth-quarter Blue Devils’ edge in scoring.

“Cameron came in, got some shots right away and settled them down,” VanBuren said. “As soon as she got on the floor, she asked me what play I wanted to call and I told her to run what she wanted and to not let it turn ugly. First time down the court she hit a three, the second time she hit a three ... and she had eight points in a matter of a minute. The bench was just a continuation of the game. They moved the ball around well and made great shots.”

Autumn Beardie had 10 points, nine rebounds, three blocks and three steals while Williams finished with eight points. Kaitlyn Begley led the squad with three assists and also had three steals.

Lake Fenton travels to Holly for a tough road game on Tuesday.

Howell 46, Fenton 33

The Tigers were outscored 11-2 in the opening quarter, eventually resulting in a 46-33 road loss to the Highlanders. The Tigers actually struggled during the first half, trailing 29-14 at the half. However, Fenton played a stronger final 16 minutes and won the second half by a 19-17 margin.
Slow start costs Eagles versus Brighton, 63-38

Linden’s Smith scores at least 20 for second straight game

By David Troppens dtroppens@tctimes.com, 810-433-6789

There were a lot of strikes going against the Linden varsity girls basketball team as the squad faced Brighton, a school over over 2,000 students.

The Eagles were given another strike after opening the game by being out-scored 13-0 in the opening quarter.

However, the Eagles were able to play better after that first quarter and remain competitive with the Bulldogs most of the rest of the game before falling 63-38 in the road contest on Wednesday.

Linden’s offense was must better the rest of the game, scoring double-digits in each of the final three periods, including outscoring Brighton 16-15 in the second quarter.

“The first quarter killed us,” Linden coach Ben Varner said. “It wasn’t like we didn’t get shots. We were 0-for-16 from the field and they were good shots. Most were inside the paint. We had some layoffs. We had some open jumpers but no threes. They blocked a few shots. They are extremely big and very good, but we were getting good shots and just couldn’t score. … Once we finally made our first basket, we kind of got it going from there.”

The Eagles cut the deficit to 10 at one time, but usually trailed by about 16. Brighton blew the game open in the final minutes.

Taylor Smith continued her strong start to the season, scoring a game-high 23 points. Smith, a Linden junior, scored 20 points in the Eagles’ 65-31 victory at Lake Fenton. She also had four steals against Brighton.

“She’s doing a really good job for us, through two games anyway,” Varner said.

“It’s going to get tougher because people are going to be scouting her, but so far she’s handled it very well. She’s doing a good job not just having the ball but off the ball, getting off screens and getting the ball to her. She is going to have to be patient and mentally tough knowing what’s going to be coming (when teams defend her in the future). So far she’s handling it well.”

Sterling DeGuyter scored seven points and had four steals, while Megan Kenney had six points and six rebounds. Brighton’s post player Cori Croker led the Bulldogs with 21 points.

“We are getting better and we got better against Brighton,” Varner said.

“Some parents came up to me and told me we played better against Brighton than we did in our win against Lake Fenton on Monday. I kind of agree with them. We didn’t score as much, but we battled back and played hard against a good team. We will battle and are going to play hard every night. If we continue to do that, we can do some things.”

Griffins

Continued from Page 17A

Cardinals dominated based on the “eye test” and on the scoreboard resulting in an 8-0 loss for the Griffins.

“We started out well. Our power play was pretty strong,” Griffins forward and captain Connor Phillips said.

“We had some decent opportunities. We have to pick up defensively — watch their wingers in front of the net. They had us beat in front of the net. We just have to work harder in practice.

“We have a lot of potential. That’s the big thing. We just have to come together as a team.”

“It came down to conditioning,” the Griffins’ first-year coach Will Dawson said. “I think our team got a little tired and relaxed a little. That’s all it takes for two quick goals.

“(At the start of the first period) we did a great job of checking, we had a lot of pressure and got a few shots. We were beating them in shots until our first penalty.”

The Cardinals really didn’t dominate any aspect of the game until their first goal with 9:40 left in the opening period. It was followed by another goal just 11 seconds later. And despite the Griffins’ domination of the first seven minutes of the contest, they were trailing 2-0.

It didn’t seem to hurt the Metro League squad for the rest of the period. The Griffins continued to play solid hockey for the rest of the period — at least until the final minute. That’s when Davison scored two more goals during the final 60 seconds. One came with 54 seconds left, and the other with just four seconds left. Suddenly, what seemed to be a pretty strong period of play for the Griffins became a 4-0 deficit at the first intermission.

In the second period Davison was clearly the stronger squad, this time outscoring the Griffins 3-0 in the 17-minute session. The Griffins entered the third period down 7-0 and one goal away from being mercyed.

The Griffins had one good chance to score in the third period on a break-away by Phillips, but the shot was saved. The Cardinals ended the game with 12:48 left in the third period.

“We just have to keep on going,” Dawson said. “We have to learn how to play through adversity even though we are down. I think (the two late first-period) goals got us down a bit on our confidence.”

It appears the Griffins could be a better product than in recent seasons. The numbers are clearly higher. The bench included 16 players. In past years numbers were sometimes more around 10 than 16.

“It’s pretty nice having a decent-sized bench,” Phillips said. “In the past we’ve had rough numbers. This year we have a lot more kids. We have a lot more freshmen and sophomores who will eventually get there and help us out. That’s nice.”

The Griffins (1-3) return to action Wednesday against the Alliance at the Polar Palace at 7:15 p.m.

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**TRI-COUNTY SPORTS**

**TOP 10**
Continued from Page 17A

The answer pretty easily — it’s cross country. Cross country runners have dominated the tri-county sports scene for a long time now. And that didn’t change this fall.

Last week we revealed squad Nos. 1 through six. Here’s our top five.

No. 5 - Holly boys tennis:
The addition of Flushing to the Metro League was supposed to add some stronger competition for Holly. The Raiders did that, but the Bronchos performed against that tougher competition with flying colors, defending their Metro championship.

Holly also won a regional crown and made another trip to the D2 state meet. However, once there, the Bronchos finished in a tie for 14th, scoring just two points. So, once again the performance perpetuated that while the Bronchos are the elite team in this region, it’s an extremely weak region. So, it’s hard to place the Bronchos any higher than this despite their league and regional dominance.

No. 4 - Linden boys cross country:
Perhaps the toughest team to place in this fall’s poll. For most of the regular season, the traditionally strong program was consistently off the radar, finishing in third place in the Metro. The Eagles were a bit fortunate to get to the state meet as well, placing third just four points into a state meet spot.

However, once at the state meet, the Eagles proved why Linden boys cross country remains one of the area’s top programs, placing seventh at the state meet. No fall program had a better state tournament performance in any sport than the Eagles, and that’s what people remember the most 10 years later.

No. 3 - Linden girls cross country:
The addition of Flushing to the Metro put an end to Linden’s two-year run atop the league, but the Eagles were still a very strong No. 2 squad. The girls also showed their strength during the regional meet, capturing the title by a whopping 41 points. The Eagles capped the season by placing 10th (out of 28 teams) at the state meet.

No. 2 - Linden boys soccer:
The battle for No. 1 was a challenging one. The Linden boys soccer team lost of a large chunk of last year’s Metro League championship squad which spent some of the season ranked No. 1 in Division 2. However, the Eagles also returned some of the best players from last year’s squad. So while many thought they’d be good, just how good remained a question.

It turned out the Eagles were very good, and maybe better than they were a year ago. Linden opened the season 11-0-1. The Eagles defended their Metro League championship, won a district crown and advanced to the regional finals before losing to Cranbrook Kingswood 3-1. Linden finished with a 20-2-1 overall mark, and could’ve easily been ranked No. 1 in this poll.

No. 1 - Holly boys cross country:
The Bronchos were expected to have a big season, and they did. During the regular season, Holly won its division of the Holly Invitational and the Kayla O’Mara Invitational. The Bronchos also dominated Metro foes, taking first in all three jamborees, and easily cruising to their second straight league crown. Of course, to win that title, Holly beat two Division 2 ranked schools (Clio and Linden) three times as well. The Bronchos began the postseason with a regional championship as well. If there was one downer to the season, it may have been finishing 11th out of 27 teams at the D1 state meet. Still, that’s the best Holly has done in ages at the state meet. And it was good enough to earn our honor as the fall’s top team.
Kevin Tyler with the stage name of Conor Savage performs as an acoustic rock/folk performer. He does about 100 shows per year, and also performs at virtual venues in Second Life, where he has generated a following. A retired GM electrician, he performs alone, and with a band. He’s sent his music all over the world, receiving applause from cultures he’s paid homage to with his music.

How do crowds react to you at the Renaissance Festival?

They love it. Most of the time, they really enjoy what we’re doing. That’s the best for me. That’s really why I do it.

Do you get feedback from people from Ireland?

Yes. I posted an old Scottish tune, on YouTube, in Gaelic. I got a lot of really nice comments from Scottish singers in Scotland. People in Scotland, Ireland and England have given me some really nice comments, and that means more to me than anything, because they don’t want to hear Americans doing Irish songs. They’re sick of it. They’re sick of Americans going over there and singing ‘Danny Boy,’ terribly, because we do!

How did you get started in music?

My mother (and I barely remember this) is from Ireland. She’s from Belfast, and she was asked to supply some entertainment for this party, and she decided I was gonna get up and sing it. I was 5 years old. She put me up on stage, and I had to sing this old Irish ‘Come all ye’ song. I was so scared I couldn’t see because my eyes were all teared up from fear. I blundered through it and all I can remember was 200 women all saying, ‘Aww, isn’t he cute.’

I started on the bagpipes at 9. Everybody in the family played something. The next thing I know, I’m taking bagpipe lessons. That’s really the only music lessons I’ve had. I’ve had those, since I was 10 years old, and I’m almost 60 now.

Lots of people have Irish heritage, but aren’t into the culture. Why are you into the culture?

Because my mother was from Ireland. It was pretty much a big part of my life from when I was a child. I grew up with an Irish mom. I didn’t get interested in modern Ireland, until the last 20 years or so. Most of my interest was in the mythology and the ancient history of it.

What do you like about modern Ireland?

I like their spirit. I think it’s because it still retains that spirit, people who go there say that they don’t want to leave, because it’s the most hospitable place on the planet, which is an ancient tradition.

Why did you choose the name Conor Savage?

My mother’s maiden name was Savage. She is descended from Sir John Savage. My favorite character of Irish mythology is Conor Mac Nessa. When we started working for the Michigan Renaissance Festival, the entertainment director asked me ‘what’s your stage name,’ and I said ‘I don’t have a stage name,’ and he said ‘you gotta have a stage name,’ so I said ‘Conor Savage.’

What else is big in your life?

My daughter. She’s the only reason I’m alive. When my ex-wife left us in 1992, I went into a severe depression and ended up getting into drugs and it almost killed me. My daughter was also going through a depression and was very sick and I thought I’d lost her a couple times. I basically raised her since she was 4, and my mother was a big help. I never thought I’d be a parent. Growing up, I was a hippie kid in the ‘70s and never saw myself having children. I always thought that was a scary thought. But the day she was born, I couldn’t imagine myself as anything else but her dad, and it’s been that way ever since. If anyone ever asked me ‘what are you?’ I’d say, ‘I’m Jamie’s dad.’

When did things feel like they stabilized for you?

After my mom and dad died in 1999, about 48 hours apart. About a year later, I almost OD’d and I had a dream about her. I woke up and I knew I was never gonna touch it again. It was bad. My mother basically came to me and saved me. I could sit here and ball, thinking about it. To lose both your parents in the same weekend is very hard.

What else should people know about you?

I hope to move to Ireland. I’m a dual citizen with an Irish passport. I moved to Fenton for the school system for my daughter. Moving to Fenton was also like a fresh start. The drugs really destroyed my finances and nearly destroyed me. I’m still recovering. I’ll probably be recovering the rest of my life.

For more information, you can e-mail questions to askthemecanic@tctimesmail.com.
Dickens Festival roars back — draws national attention

BBC commissioning a story on Holly’s famous festival

By Tim Jagielo
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Holly — For an hour last Friday, it seemed as if the whole village descended on downtown Holly, to fill Saginaw Street to almost the light at Maple Street, as lazily falling snow filled the air.

From the stage, Santa Claus raised his arms to the crowd of the more than 1,000 — the most Police Chief Michael Story had seen in one place in Holly since he started there in 2006.

The lighted parade was simple and short, but the Holly High School Marching Band’s holiday cacophony seemed to blare in the clear message for Dickens Festival in Holly — the festival is being revived. Amid the activity, decked out in his stage costume, festival committee member George Kullis said, “This committee kicked butt this year. We’re putting the festival up to include Battle Alley again, the stages, signage and props, and opened approximately 40 worked all year building the official website. It’s easy to forget, that in February this year, the fate of the festival was in the balance — a vote was made by the committee to give the festival one more year, after the festival seemed to flounder in the last couple years.

But the festival is back for three weekends this year, and so far, it’s a screaming success. Kullis guesses 4,500 came through downtown Holly last weekend, and there is still two more weekends to go.

While sponsorship initially has fallen short of the $35,000 goal, last weekend’s kick off seemed to prompt new donors into giving, as some last-minute advertising was able to be bought.

On Tuesday, Kullis spoke via phone, while trailering back a new wooden farm cart to give hay rides around downtown.

He was more excited about an email he received that morning — the BBC is commissioning a story about Holly’s festival, as the longest running Dickens-themed event, running for more than one weekend. Lucinda Anne Dickens Hawk-sley has been commissioned to write it. That’s “Dickens” as in, the famous writer’s great-great granddaughter. “I just think that was huge, for the festival to get that notoriety,” said Kullis. He figures they found the festival through the official website.

“We had a plan, we had more people, we had a layout,” Kullis said. The committee of approximately 40 worked all year building the stages, signage and props, and opened the festival up to include Battle Alley again, and make it more walkable.

This weekend, there is a live nativity, and more performers overall. The committee has been working all week in between, tweaking the festival based on the first weekend, and even building new signs.

So far, Kullis’ five-year plan for the festival is going well, but he has his sights set a little higher — featuring Holly’s signature festival in the Thanksgiving Day Parade in Detroit. Considering this early success, you might have to mark your calendars for 2018.

DICKENS FESTIVAL DETAILS

DECEMBER TIMES AND DATES:
Saturday, Dec. 6 from 1-8 p.m.
This weekend’s attractions include children's readings at the Hadley House Museum, dance performances, St. Dominic's Choir at the Holly Hotel, roaming street magic, living nativity, chili and confections tent and an art show.
Saturday, Dec. 13 from 1-8 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 14 from 1-5 p.m.
Attractions this weekend include the Run Like the Dickens race, all-day scavenger hunt, cupcake eating contest, a cappella duet, choir and dance performances.

Go to hollydickensfestival.org for more on scheduling

The Holly High School Marching Band anchored the event, parting the crowd of 1,000, as it marched its way down Saginaw Street.

The first weekend of the festival the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) mobile platform had 900 visitors. They will be at the festival again next weekend.

Dan Couchman and son Kole, 3, of Holly, use the interactive activities the Detroit Institute of Art (DIA) mobile platform offers.
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- **$14,305
- **Discount**: $1,727
- **BLOW OUT PRICE!**: $12,578

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- **$15,900**

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