Fenton police report rash of credit card fraud

**Area banks investigating over 50 incidents**

By Sharon Stone

Terry Green, owner of Billmeier Camera in Fenton, has one-liners ready for his customers, whether they come in for advice, to shop or for repairs. This time of year, sales can triple.

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**‘Puppy love’ for Christmas?**

Adopt-A-Pet rescues 39 dogs that need homes

See Page 9A

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**Sobriety Court provides second chance**

Participants must agree to drastic lifestyle changes.

Page 7A

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**Parents oppose controversial school changes**

Linden board explores options due to expected $1.82 million shortfall.

Page 11A

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**A walk through the Old Testament**

Tyrone Covenant brings story of Jesus’ birth to life through annual Jesus Walk.

Page 22A

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**“Question for anyone out there. President Obama keeps calling the terrorist group ISIS. Everyone else calls them ISIL. Is there something I don’t know?”**

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**“To my mom: whenever I’m sad, you are there. Whenever I’m having problems, you are always there. Whenever my life goes out of control, you are always there. Let’s face it mom, you’re bad luck.”**

---

**“I have a CPL and the scariest situation I can imagine being in is having to draw my weapon and use it to defend myself or my family. The only thing scarier would be not being able to draw that weapon to defend myself or my family.”**
Merry Christmas

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Army Pvt. Patrick McLellan, 18, surprises his sister Haley, 13, with a visit to her class at Lake Fenton Middle School Thursday afternoon. The siblings hadn’t seen each other in five months as he was stationed in Oklahoma. She was expecting to see him on Monday, her birthday. Haley was dismissed from class to enjoy dinner with her family.

“She’s always wanted to do this,” said their mom, Dawn McLellan, of Fenton Township. “We’re really proud of him.”

Patrick will be home on leave until Jan. 3. He is a 2015 graduate of Lake Fenton High School.
In defense of Christmas

Every year, as predictable as a full moon or Lindsay Lohan being arrested for shoplifting, some kilioj mounts their soapbox to tell us that Christmas no longer has any meaning because Americans spend too much money on Christmas gifts, and evil retailers have made a mockery of the true meaning of Christmas. I once believed that also, but no more.

To them I say quit being a miserly Scrooge — if you can’t say something nice about a period each year that the vast majority of Americans feel compelled to buy a gift for those that they love, well — just shut the firetruck u p.

For argument’s sake, let’s imagine that we didn’t celebrate Christmas. No festively decorated Christmas trees in every home. No twinkling lights in the downtown areas of each municipality. No sappy Christmas movies to be enjoyed by families gathered together in the evening.

No children’s desperately scrawled letters to Santa. No jingling of the Salvation Army bell ringsers outside the stores. And, unhinkably, no universal feeling of hope and joy for the entire world.

How would the world be improved by ending each year in the same way we lived the previous 11 months? How would that make us better? How would society better absorb the sentiment and love that inexplicably abounds each Christmas season?

So spend more than they should, or can afford? Absolutely. But it is done with the best of intentions — wanting to please the people they love. That is certainly a forgivable sin. The act of giving a gift to someone you love and respect is one of the greatest joys of humanity.

I once read the sage observation that people who choose to make a statement by not partaking in the ritual of Christmas gift-giving are not particularly noble — they are particularly cheap. They are the same people who ultimately die with a full bank account, but an empty heart and an empty life.

And what about children? The holiday season is always accompanied by some professorial talk-head on TV admonishing us that today’s children don’t get the real meaning of Christmas — that they simply associate the season with the commercialized perspective of receiving gifts.

Gosh, do ya think? Doesn’t everyone relate to some way to Ralph’s wondrous awe at receiving his coveted lever-action, spring piston, smooth-barreled, adjustable sight, gravity feed Red Ryder Winchester Model BB gun? Do we really expect young children to focus on the theological aspect of Christmas? Isn’t it enough to know that most children’s happiest memories center around Christmas?

At the end of the day gift-givers are giving the greatest gift of all — happiness. To both the buyer and the recipient. And at the same time celebrating the birthday of Jesus. That’s a good thing — right?

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.

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IN THE NEWS: That there are 11 states that have more people on healthcare than employed, whether you’re talking food stamps, housing, child care, Medicaid, or other benefits. This fits in nicely with Obama’s plan to socialize the United States and have the government take care of people.
Times office closes for Christmas

Visit tctimes.com or the Times Facebook page for any breaking news

By Sharon Stone
sstone@tctimes.com; 810-433-6786

In the spirit of Christmas and spending time with family and loved ones, the Tri-County Times’ office will be closed on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 and Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

The Times also will not be publishing or mailing a newspaper on Wednesday, Dec. 23 or Wednesday, Dec. 30.

In the event of breaking local news, the Times editorial staff will be on call around the clock. To contact the editorial department, email news@tctimes.com or stay connected through tctimes.com and the Times Facebook page.

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Sobriety Court provides second chance

By Vera Hogan
vhogan@tctimes.com; 810-433-8823

Participants must submit to random drug and alcohol testing twice a week, said Char Sierakowski. “There has to be some degree of willingness because this is a lifestyle change,” she said.

Sobriety Court is not new in Genesee County. It was operated informally (not state certified) for a few years under 67th District Court Judge Larry Stec. It is now operated under Judge Vikki Bayeh Haley of the 67th District Court in Mt. Morris.

“She took over in November when we became state certified,” said Sierakowski. Some of the current participants of the Sobriety Court are grandfathered as far as requirements under Stecco’s program. None of the Sobriety Court participants under the current state certified program are ready yet for graduation.

Since treatment is individualized, it may be that participants graduate from the program individually rather than in groups.

“There is an intense program,” said Sierakowski. “There has to be some degree of willingness because this is a lifestyle change.”

The Sobriety Court Team completed training during the week of Dec. 7. The team consists of a prosecutor, defense attorney, a judge, three probation officers each with different roles, a community advisor who helps with alcohol — and drug-free events, and treatment providers, said Sierakowski.

“Our program is a work in progress at this point,” she said. “We are in the process of tweaking and working any kinks out.”

The main goal is to keep the public safe.

SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Incredible journey I have ever taken

Jenny Sucher

Drunk Driving

In 2013, there were 255 drunk driving fatalities statewide (08 BAC or higher); 255 representing 26.9 percent of all total traffic deaths, a 2.3 percent decrease from the previous year. Additional statistics include:

- Alcohol related crash injuries (.01 BAC or higher): 4,633
- Alcohol related crashes (.01 BAC or higher): 8,892
- DUI arrests: 34,363
- DUI convictions: 16,470
- DUI refusals: 3,636
- Taxpayer subsidy of drunk driving fatalities: $1.3 billion

According to MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), the state required ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers. They say Michigan would also benefit from high-visibility law enforcement activities.

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Sierakowski added.

In order to qualify for the Sobriety Court program, one has to have two alcohol convictions, the second of which had to be after 2011.

“We do not accept violent offenders and participants must be residents of Genesee County,” said Sierakowski.

In addition to treatment, participants must submit to random drug and alcohol testing twice a week, and meet regularly with a probation officer and attend court hearings. Those in phase 1 of the program must attend court twice a month. Once they are in Phase 2 and beyond, they only need to attend court once a month.

Participants may also be subject to ignition interlocks on vehicles they own.

“At some point there is community service in order to give back,” said Sierakowski.

“It’s really exciting to talk with graduates and hear about the outcomes they never thought could happen,” she said. “It’s such a great thing to hear.”

Denise Ketchmark of Fenton Township, an attorney with offices in Flint, said Sobriety Court is good if the people who qualify do what they are supposed to do.

“Oftentimes, these specialty courts are used by the participant to avoid a harsher penalty, such as jail or prison,” Ketchmark said.

“It’s either all or nothing though. If there are ‘too many forgivenesses’ by the court due to a participant’s failure to abide by the terms of Sobriety Court, the purpose of Sobriety Court is undermined by the rule breakers,” she added.

“As a defense attorney, I love this as an alternative for my client, but if the client continues to drink and uses ‘I’ve relapsed’ as an excuse, it takes away from the integrity of the Sobriety Court and ruins it for those who are serious about sobriety,” Ketchmark said.

Sobriety court graduate says without it, future held jail or death

By Vera Hogan
vhogan@tctimes.com; 810-433-8823

While the Genesee County team finishes tweaking its newly state certified Sobriety Court program, there is one local woman, who graduated from the Oakland County (52-2 District) Sobriety Court in 2008, grateful for her experience.

She has been sober since March 5, 2006 and it has changed her life.

“I have been sober now for nine years and nine months,” said Jenny Sucher. “It has been the most incredible journey I have ever taken in my life, with ups and downs and many miracles along the way.

See SOBRIETY on 20A

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And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Rebedecked 3506 Silver Lake Rd., Fenton • Hours: 10-6 M-F • 10-4 Sat.

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Looking Back

at this week

in HISTORY

Compiled by Vera Hogan

Local

5 YEARS

Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010

Negotiations continue with Michigan Brewing Company at the old fire hall site. The Fenton Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is negotiating with Michigan Brewing Company for a restaurant development at the old fire hall, built in 1937. Negotiations involve a lease-to-own agreement with the firm.

10 YEARS

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2005

CDBG money could fund teen’s home makeover. A wheelchair-bound teenager living in Fenton Township may soon be able to wheel his way into his bedroom for the first time. A Board of Trustees decision will allocate $55,000 of 2004 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds toward necessary improvements at the teen’s home.

15 YEARS

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2000

Deputies transport accused killer back to Michigan. After evade in Missouri, Tabitha Lee Maynard, the 21-year-old Lake Fenton High School graduate (1997) accused of killing her father last Monday morning, was brought back to Michigan by Genesee County Sheriff’s deputies. Richard Maynard, 46, was pronounced dead late Tuesday night after being shot with a handgun while he slept.

20 YEARS

Sunday, Dec. 24, 1995

City grants sewer tap-in extensions. More than $900,000 in water and sewer tap-in revenue was given up last Monday as the Fenton City Council voted to grant a handful of developers and business owners a six-month extension to start their projects at old tap-in rates.

25 YEARS

Sunday, Dec. 23, 1990

Eyeing new home. Linden city manager has vision. City Manager Greg Moyer is envisioning a new setting for Linden’s downtown, which could include a community center for public use. Moyer confirmed that he toured the old Evans Food building and talked to the owner. The sale price is listed at $150,000 and the building would be perfect for Linden, according to Moyer.

30 YEARS

Sunday, Dec. 22, 1985

Best Western Hotel for Fenton. A new, 60-unit Best Western Hotel could be open for business May 1. Located at 3255 Owen Road (currently Mega Coney Island and Arby’s sites), behind the Steak and Cakes Restaurant, the hotel will employ about 30 people.

Correction:

In the story, “Students with disabilities learn valuable skills on the job,” published on Sunday, Dec. 13, it was incorrectly reported that Lockwood of Fenton was an assisted living facility. Lockwood of Fenton is an independent senior living community.

Regional

20 YEARS

Tuesday, Jan. 15, 1996

A bomb hidden inside an audio cassette player detonated in the cargo area when the plane was at an altitude of 31,000 feet. The disaster, which became the subject of Britain’s largest criminal investigation, was believed to be an attack against the United States. One hundred eighty-nine of the victims were American.

NATIONAL

DECEMBER 20

1957: White spending the Christmas holidays at Graceland, his newly purchased Tennessee mansion, rock-and-roll star Elvis Presley receives his draft notice for the United States Army.

DECEMBER 21

1988: Pan Am Flight 103 from London to New York explodes in midair over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 243 passengers and 16 crew members aboard, as well as 11 Lockerbie residents on the ground. A bomb hidden in a plastic water bottle exploded.

DECEMBER 22

1978: John Wayne Gacy confesses to police to killing over two dozen boys and young men and burning their bodies under his suburban Chicago home. In March 1980, Gacy was convicted of 33 sex-related murders, committed between 1972 and 1976, and given the death penalty. At the time, he was the worst serial killer in modern American history. George Ridgeway, known as the Green River Killer, overtook Gacy in November 2003, when he admitted to murdering 48 women in the Pacific Northwest.

DECEMBER 23

1988: Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, suffering from severe depression, cuts off the lower part of his left ear with a razor while staying in Arles, France. He later documented the event in a painting titled Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear. Today, Van Gogh is regarded as an artistic genius and his masterpieces sell for record-breaking prices; however, during his lifetime, he was a poster boy for tortured starving artists and sold only one painting.

DECEMBER 24

1923: President Calvin Coolidge touches a button and lights up the first national Christmas tree to grace the White House grounds. Not only was this the first White House “community” Christmas tree, but it was the first to be decorated with electric lights, a strand of 2,500 red, white and green bulbs. The balsam fir came from Coolidge’s home state of Vermont and stood 48 feet tall.

DECEMBER 25

1996: Six-year-old JonBenet Ramsey is killed in her Boulder, Colorado, home. John and Patsy Ramsey, her parents, called police at 5:52 the following morning to report that their daughter was missing. Although police found a ransom note demanding $118,000, the money would never be necessary, because JonBenet’s body was found under a blanket in the basement that afternoon. The crime soon became a national sensation.

DECEMBER 26

1972: Former President Harry S. Truman dies in Independence, Missouri. Then-President Richard Nixon called Truman a man of “forthrightness and integrity” who had a deep respect for the office he held and who “supported and wisely counseled each of his successors.”
Puppy love for Christmas?

Adopt-A-Pet rescues 39 dogs in need of ‘forever’ homes

By Hannah Ball
hbali@tctimes.com; 810-433-6702

Thirty-nine new dogs that recently arrived in Fenton Township are seeking homes.

Jody Maddock, director of Adopt-A-Pet in Fenton Township, and her husband, Mark, brought back 39 dogs of various breeds Monday night, after driving nine hours each way to retrieve them from Kentucky.

“Last week we received a call from a shelter that was overwhelmed with mama dogs with puppies from a rural area in Kentucky,” she said. “It’s at the Appalachian Mountains and the stray population is out of control. They are doing what they can to help but are a very small shelter and needed help.”

They weren’t able to bring back all the dogs they wanted, but they did make sure to take females so they wouldn’t continue reproducing more puppies. “We put lavender in their crates and played music to help keep them calm and stress free as possible,” he said.

Some of the dogs need medical attention and many are too young to be adopted. “They will not be ready for adoption until they are cleared in a week,” she said. They will be ready for adoption during the week of Dec. 21. “Once they are fixed, updated on all of their medical (needs), checked for parasites and evaluated by our vet they will be ready to join their new families.”

“The shelter always needs volunteers, currently they’re in need of canned and dry puppy food. Maddock said food like Chicken Soup for the Puppy Lover’s Soul, Diamond Naturals, 4Health, and others are great. They also need supplies like bleach, paper towels, laundry detergent, and gift cards for pet stores or Tractor Supply to buy supplies. Volunteers must attend their new volunteer orientation before they can start, which takes place the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. or the third Saturday of the month at 2 p.m. “We are so thankful for the volunteers we have. That is such a big help,” she said. “Our staff and volunteers are working very hard to keep the remaining animals at our center clean and taken care of.”

While the shelter always needs volunteers, currently they’re in need of canned and dry puppy food. Maddock said food like Chicken Soup for the Puppy Lover’s Soul, Diamond Naturals, 4Health, and others are great. They also need supplies like bleach, paper towels, laundry detergent, and gift cards for pet stores or Tractor Supply to buy supplies. Volunteers must attend their new volunteer orientation before they can start, which takes place the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. or the third Saturday of the month at 2 p.m.

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Holly couple stars on ‘House Hunters’

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

The Holly couple stars in the Christmas episode of HGTV’s House Hunters will air its Christmas episode on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 at 7 p.m. It will feature Holly couple, Nicole Distel and Mike Stahl.

HGTV’s House Hunters will air its Christmas episode on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 at 7 p.m. It will feature Holly couple, Nicole Distel and Mike Stahl.

What was it like to be filmed for TV?

“It was actually more work for Ann than it was for us, because she had to do all the behind-the-scenes stuff,” said Stahl, who owns Stahl Tech Heating & Cooling in Holly. “It took more time for her to make appointments and get permission from the homeowner to have a camera crew at their house.”

The biggest surprise for the couple was how much time it took to produce enough footage for a 23-minute show. “They filmed for days,” said Stahl. “We even went to Bronners in Frankenmuth one evening to shop for a wreath.”

While you might think that these three local “stars” would be fully made up and costumed for the show, they actually wore no make up and chose their own clothing.

“I got my clothes right here at Marta’s Loft in Holly,” said Hernandez-Gabler.

“It’s not a slam dunk. It’s not a slam dunk. It has to go through a whole vetting process.”

“Titled ‘Lots of Land or On the Water in Holly, Michigan,’ this episode chronicles this couple’s search for their dream home, despite the fact they both had differing views on what ‘perfect’ meant for their family — on the water to enjoy their pontoon or on the land with more acreage for outdoor recreation.

“I wanted a house with old farmhouse-style character and Mike wanted an updated, contemporary ranch-style home.”

What was the best part of the experience?

“I watched ‘House Hunters’ all the time, so for me it was very surreal to actually be on the show,” said Distel. She found herself recognized by people in town after the show aired, and had the fun of feeling like a celebrity. “I saw you on HGTV!” she was told numerous times at a recent holiday event in Holly.

For Hernandez-Gabler, the most fun was seeing how HGTV put it all together, showing all the different personalities involved. “It was fun to see how the story came together.”

For herself professionally, she said, “There aren’t many agents who can say they’ve been on a nationally syndicated TV show.”

TRI-COUNTY TIMES | SALLY RUMMEL

Mike Stahl and Nicole Distel of Holly discuss features of one of the homes they toured for House Hunters with Realtor Ann Hernandez-Gabler of Legacy Realty (right).
Parents oppose school changes

Linden board explores options due to expected $1.82 million shortfall

By Hannah Ball
hb@tctimes.com; 810-433-6792

Linden — As the cost containment discussion continued for Linden schools during its public forum on Monday, parents questioned whether the choices were the best academic options for their students.

Because Linden schools expect to lose approximately 233 students within the next three years, resulting in a revenue loss of 1.82 million, and less than 1-percent fund balance by the end of 2016-2017, the Board of Education has held public forums to discuss options with concerned parents and staff.

At this week’s public forum, Interim Superintendent Russ Ciesielski went over three options for a cost containment plan and how each option could save the district.

He said the district has looked at getting rid of “limited low-hanging fruit,” like curriculum expenses and substitute teacher costs, to minimize costs, but it’s not enough.

**Grade level centers**
The three options for grade level centers, which split the elementary grades between the three buildings, have garnered the most debate.

The first option is having kindergarten-first grade in one building, second and third grades in another, and fourth and fifth in the last building. This option could save $656,000, meet class size targets, have simplified busing schedules, and staggered start times at the elementary buildings.

However, the district would see a reduction of eight staff members and students would experience three transitions before they reached middle school, something some parents do not like.

The second option is to put kindergarten through third grade in two buildings and fourth and fifth grades in one building. This could possibly save $492,000, meet class size targets, and have staggered start times.

Students would only experience two transitions, but the kindergarten through third grade buildings would not have equivalent class sizes, academic consistency, simplified busing, and students wouldn’t have peer groups until fourth grade.

The third option is putting kindergarten and first grade in one building and second through fifth grade in the other two buildings, which could save $492,000. Target class sizes could be met, but there wouldn’t be simplified busing, and the second through fifth-grade buildings would not have equivalent class sizes or peer groups.

With the current option, the district could save $574,000 with seven staff reductions, but could see split classrooms, and would not have appropriate class sizes, equitable class sizes, simplified busing, peer groups, or academic consistency.

Moreover, with the last three options, it becomes harder to maintain academic consistency and to manage the student population with regards to classrooms and transportation, Ciesielski said.

Currently, Central Elementary and Hyatt Elementary receive Title 1 monies. All buildings would receive this money with the first option, but not with options two and three.

With the current configuration, Linden Elementary does not receive Title 1 monies.

Split classrooms, where two grades are taught in one classroom by one teacher, would be likely with the current configuration.

“It really depends on the student population. It could be a last-minute decision,” Ciesielski said.

**Trimesters to semesters**
This option could possibly save $82,000 to $328,000 over the next six-plus years.

Personnel would be reduced by approximately one to four staff members, less money would be sent on curriculum supplies, but students would have fewer academic options.

**Full-day Young Fives program**
Currently, the district receives half of the $7,391 FTE (full-time equivalent) per student for the Young Fives program, and as of count day this year, 31 students were enrolled. With a full-day program, the district would receive the full amount.

A few parents in attendance Monday spoke about how difficult the grade level centers would be for young children who need consistency, not more transitions, and if it’s the best option academically.

One parent, Zak McGraw, moved with his family from Livonia to Linden specifically for the schools. He said he doesn’t like that his son would have so many transitions.

“It would be horrible. It would force us to look at school of choice,” he said.

Parents Jason and Elizabeth Heffner, who have four children, said the grade level centers could alienate larger families because parents would have to drive to numerous schools to drop off or pick up their students.

One Linden mother, who has three young boys, said they chose to come here specifically because they wanted their kids to be in the same school.

“I’ve been a kindergarten teacher for 15 years and kids need consistency. I think it would be ridiculous and I think you would be losing new people coming in and we would consider school of choice,” she said.

No decision has been made at this time. Ciesielski stressed that the board has been receiving helpful feedback from staff and parents and he encourages people to give suggestions.
I had a really great experience with John Wentworth III. My house was listed quickly and had numerous offers. His assistant did a really great job of staying in contact with me during the whole process, and answering any questions I had. They are really professional, and I would recommend them to anyone looking to buy or sell their property.
Lake Fenton High School has a foreign exchange student from Yokohama, Japan. When Satoru Okada, 17, came to America this summer to study abroad, he chose to go by the name “Joe.” He’s staying with an area couple, Tim and Rachel Draeger, and their three daughters.

His favorite part about being here has been flying in a small plane his host father owns. They’ve gone up five or six times, with the highest altitude of 8,000 feet.

“We always use cars, sometimes airplane. But in Japan, almost all the time I use the train,” he said. “The train is so crowded, especially during rush hour.”

His host family are huge Michigan State fans. He’s been to games in East Lansing.

Okada misses Japanese food, like curry and rice. “Here, a lot of people eat a lot of sour cream and cream cheese. Just a little bit of a surprise,” he said, adding that he really likes the ribs his host mother makes.

He said he’s enjoyed school at Lake Fenton and has made many friends. Okada joined after-school sports, playing football for the junior varsity team and joining the wrestling team. He said the coaches and his teammates have been great.

American classes are very different from Japanese classes. “In Japan, the students only sit down at the table and take notes almost whole classes. Here, we have to take notes but it’s more discussion and we talk to each other. It’s more fun,” he said.
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RETAILERS
Continued from Front Page

“People started shopping later, it seems, so now all of a sudden, Christmas is coming up quick. We went from ‘where is everybody?’ to doing a month’s worth of work in about a week and a half.”

Fenton Township resident and owner of the Sears Hometown Store in Fenton said, “Overall sales volume is up from last year, and with some snow it should get even better. People are certainly in the shopping spirit.”

Despite the unseasonable, snowy weather, retailers are reporting brisk holiday sales. Frank Mosher of Mos’Art Jewelers in Fenton said that this unusually warm weather has been good for business this Christmas. “Snowstorms and 5 degrees are bad for my business,” he said. “Good weather always brings people in.”

Many retailers have noted that the warmer temperatures have caused some shoppers to procrastinate this season. Colder weather would likely help some retailers, including Glik’s in Fenton, well-known for carrying exclusive cold weather brands like The North Face and UGG boots. But store manager Sara DeBond says that the Christmas shopping season has gone very well. “All our numbers are up this year. We’ve seen sales jump a lot in the last few days as Christmas gets closer. Customers love our new Hunter rain boot brand.”

Bridge Street Exchange owner Kevin Begola in Linden said that business is getting busier the closer Christmas gets. “We’re really starting to see it ‘liven up’,” he said. “Stormy Kromer hats for men and especially for women, Shinola watches, we’ve been really busy since Thanksgiving. ‘It’s the largest growth in any of our stores. The growth of our store in our hometown. This year has enjoyed this year.’”

Alex & Ani is still the hot thing for gifts we’re not heavy into cold weather gear. “We’ve been really busy since Thanksgiving. The North Face and UGG boots. But store manager Sara DeBond says that the Christmas shopping season has gone very well. “All our numbers are up this year. We’ve seen sales jump a lot in the last few days as Christmas gets closer. Customers love our new Hunter rain boot brand.”

Tara Wakeham, co-owner of The Iron Grate in Fenton, has been very busy this season with sales in her downtown boutique, although “the holiday kind of snuck up on us because of the weather,” she said. “We carry such unique things. That’s really the Christmas spirit, finding just the right gift for someone special.”

Brooke Gerych of Gerych’s Distinctive Flowers & Gifts in Fenton has enjoyed a good season so far. “I think it will be even better this week,” he said. “We’ve still got a good stretch coming up yet. The weather’s been good for delivery and lower heating bills and gas prices are making things easier for people. We’ve got lots of great gifts at Gerych’s for under $25.”

Ronny Medawar of Medawar Jewelers in Fenton has just one word for this season, “wonderful.” We are so proud of the growth of our store in our hometown. It’s the largest growth in any of our stores. We’ve been really busy since Thanksgiving. There’s been a huge response to our largest sale ever. We’re making room for our new styles and designs for 2016.”

“Overall, sales volume is up from last year and with some snow it should get even better. People are certainly in the shopping spirit.”

Elections of Fenton is celebrating its eighth Christmas season this year. “It’s actually what we’ve expected to be,” said owner Nicole McCurdy. “The weather hasn’t affected us too much, as we’re not heavy into cold weather gear. Alex & Ani is still the hot thing for gifts this year.”

Colder days help business at French Flamingo in downtown Holly, according to owner Sandra Kleven. “But we’re still on par with our prior (two) years. People like our good prices and late hours. Shawlette scarves that can be worn as a shawl or as a scarf are popular and our hobos (fingerless) gloves are a big hit as always.”

“It’s been a great Christmas season,” said John Winglemire of Winglemire Furniture and Joseph’s Oak Shop in Holly. “The last two years have been wonderful, definitely with some snow. There are lots of tourists in town.”

At Stevens Furniture in Fenton, many of their customers are taking their holiday sitting down — literally. “We sell a lot of recliners, mostly La-Z-Boy, for Christmas,” said co-owner Gary Suszek. “With the weather being nice, we’ve had a lot of out-of-town shoppers. So far, it’s been a good season. We’ll be busy after Christmas, too, with year-end sales.”
Lady Bronchos’ late-game comeback falls a tad short

By David Troppens

dtroppens@tctimes.com

It was a case of two different halves for the Holly varsity girls basketball team at Holly High School on Tuesday. The Bronchos dominated the first half, but Pontiac Notre Dame Prep dominated the second half, earning a 42-39 victory against the Lady Bronchos.

The visitors started out strong, taking an early 16-12 lead, but Holly (2-3) dominated the rest of the first half, going on a 16-2 run. Just moments after a Paige Reid three-pointer, Kaitlyn Smith capped the run with another trey, putting the Bronchos up 28-18. Holly led 28-20 at halftime.

However, the second half was all Notre Dame Prep. Sarah Beckett gave the Fighting Irish their first lead of the second half at 33-32 in the fourth quarter with two converted free throws. Notre Dame didn’t slow down after getting the lead.

Holly varsity boys basketball coach Lance Baylis said, “We still had some lapses but we are definitely headed in the right direction.”

“We started playing Holly basketball,” said Holly senior Ian Hodges, who had some lapses but we are definitely headed in the right direction.”

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INSIDE SPORTS

GRIFFINS
Fenton/Linden co-op hockey team loses recent game.

See Page 18A

FENTON SWIMMERS SPLIT RECENT MEET

The Fenton varsity boys swimming and diving team accomplished about what they could’ve expected in a dual meet against Grand Blanc and Powers.

Powers lost to area power Grand Blanc 139-51, but defeated Powers 120-63 in the Tuesday night meet. The Tigers didn’t take any overall firsts at the event, but did earn three overall seconds and three more overall thirds in individual events.

Zac Miceli earned two of the individual runner-up efforts, taking second in the 200 individual medley (2:10.42) and the 100 butterfly (57.18). The other was earned by Kyle Banner who recorded a second in the 500 freestyle (5:21.93). Banner also finished third in the 200 freestyle (1:59.0). The other individual thirds were earned by Jacob Vickers in diving (154.70) and Evan Bartow in the 500 freestyle (5:25.23).

The Tigers’ top relay performance came in the 400 freestyle relay. Banner, Michael Fabatzi, Justin Beemer and Miceli placed second with a time of 3:33.44.

The meet was Fenton’s final competition until after the holiday break.

Holly looks like normal self, beats Blue Devils

Hodges’ 28 leads Bronchos past Lake Fenton

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

Lake Fenton — Two games into the season, the Holly Bronchos have frustrated themselves and their fans as the 2015-16 edition of the varsity boys basketball team has struggled to find its identity.

On Tuesday, the Bronchos (3-0) took a big step toward finding that positive identity. The Lake Fenton Blue Devils were the unfortunate victims in Holly’s progress.

Holly shared the ball better, converted more free throws and just played a style of basketball Bronchos’ fans have come to expect over the last couple of years en route to a pretty impressive 74-48 non-league victory against the Blue Devils at Lake Fenton High School.

The Blue Devils are no slouch themselves. Lake Fenton is blessed with some downright talented players. However, the combination of Holly playing “Bronchos’ basketball” and Lake Fenton being in foul trouble kept the Blue Devils from presenting too great of a challenge against the two-time defending Metro League champions.

“We are going in the right direction,” Holly varsity boys basketball coach Lance Baylis said. “We still had some lapses but we are definitely headed in the right direction.”

“We started playing Holly basketball,” said Holly senior Ian Hodges, who led all scorers with 28 points. “That’s how everyone plays in practice. I just want to be a leader and want to lead by example. I’m not the most vocal person. I just let my game talk and let everyone else follow. That’s how we turned the third quarter around.”

Lake Fenton hang with the Bronchos for most of the first half, but what was just a 32-23 deficit after two converted free throws by the Blue Devils’ Jalen Miller, quickly became a 38-25 halftime deficit, sparked by a Hodges steal, two Hodges converted free throws and a Hodges buzzer-beating shot at halftime. Still, the Blue Devils must’ve felt they were within a strong run away from getting back into the contest when the second half started.

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ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

To find out about Friday night’s prep basketball action, visit tctimes.com
Griffins grounded vs. L’Anse Creuse

Griffins knocked out by L’Anse Creuse

By David Troppens
dtroppens@tctimes.com; 810-433-6879

If a team is going to have an off-day, the Metro League Griffins selected the right game to have one.

The Linden/Fenton co-op hockey squad lost to L’Anse Creuse North on Tuesday, but remain a strong 5-2-0 for the season and are still undefeated in Flint Metro League action.

The Metro League Griffins’ Brandon Diener (left) and another teammate on the right sandwich check an opponent in a recent hockey game. The Fenton/Linden co-op hockey squad lost to L’Anse Creuse North on Tuesday, but remain a strong 5-2-0 for the season and are still undefeated in Flint Metro League action.

BYLINES

BYLINES

Griffins knock out L’Anse Creuse

Bobby Temple scored about a minute into the game off of assists from Jake Thompson and Tyler Bouressa. However, before the period was up, L’Anse Creuse owned a 2-1 lead.

The Griffins never tied the contest again. In fact, L’Anse Creuse made it four unanswered goals before the area co-op scored again. This time Brendan Buerkel assisted Temple’s 12th goal of the season, cutting the margin to 4-2. However, that’s as close as the Griffins got.

Despite the loss, the Griffins have had a strong start to the season, and still own a 5-2-0 mark overall. The team is unbeaten in two Metro League contests, earning early-season victories against the Kearsley, Holly and Brandon co-op program (KBH United) by a convincing 6-0 margin and against the Swartz Creek, Clio and Flushing co-op team.

Against KBH five different players scored goals. They were Temple (twice), Thompson, Bourressa, Buerkel and Mitch O’Lewin.

The squad played in the Alpine Blue Line Tournament on Friday and Saturday. The games were the squad’s final contests during the 2015 portion of the winter schedule.

The Griffins play non-league Davison, Dec. 4 at the Dort Federal Credit Union Event Center.

BRONCHOS’
Continued from Page 17A

Boys Basketball

Linden’s Travis Klocek netted a team score of 134.77.

Lake Fenton’s Miranda Stephens grabbed third with an all-around score of 35.625.

The top three positions were captured by LFLF teammates. Linden’s Blake Hutchings finished second in the all-around with a four-event score of 35.475.

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Lake Fenton’s Miranda Stephens led the squad by earning the all-around title with a four-event score of 35.625.

The top three positions were captured by LFLF teammates. Linden’s Blake Hutchings finished second in the all-around with a four-event score of 35.475.

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Lake Fenton’s Miranda Stephens led the squad by earning the all-around title with a four-event score of 35.625.
DEVILS

Continued from Page 18A

ranked Gaylord in the finals 47-27. The Eagles had five wrestlers finish in the top six. They were Luke Zimmermann, Bryce Davis, Patrick Kerr, Dawson Blank and Keolten Strauss.

Mitchell Kerr, Jaylin Steedman and Justin Cynar earned 4-1 marks while Caleb White, Chandler Monsey, Cade Dickson and Stojan Prasac had three wins each.

Holly at Greenville Team Tournament

The Bronchos (4-3) traveled to Greenville and came home with a 2-3 record. The Bronchos earned a 44-35 victory against Petoskey and a 76-0 victory against Wyoming. Holly lost to Petoskey and a 76-0 victory against Caledonia 42-30.

Sturgis 39-34, Greenville 54-24 and

Holly still led by 13 when the Bronchos’ defense forced four straight steals. Two were provided by Hodges and another two were recorded by Adam Tooley, resulting in transition hoops for Holly. Hodges was the beneficiary of many of those scoring chances, scoring 15 of his game-high 28 points in the third quarter.

Hodges hit two treys, nailed a perfect 4-of-4 free throws after getting fouled on transition attempts. He also made two traditional layups. On one he was fouled as well. He converted his fifth free throw of the period, putting the Blue Devils up 61-33 with 55.7 seconds left in the third quarter. From there, the Blue Devils (1-1) weren’t ever able to get back into the contest.

While many Bronchos had big games, none was better than Hodges’ day. Hodges netted 8-of-16 shots, including 3-of-6 from behind the three-point arc. He had a team-high five steals, grabbed three rebounds and took a charge. He also was a perfect 9-for-9 at the charity stripe, a spot the Bronchos have struggled at all season long. As a team Holly hit on 25-of-34 free throws. Meanwhile, the Blue Devils attempted 18 free throws, netting just 10 of them.

“Coach put the stats up yesterday and we were shooting like 67 percent as a team which he said was one of the lowest percentages Holly has ever had,” Hodges said. “We just have to make shots.”

Holly scored eight of the game’s first 10 points and led 8-2 after Hodges hoop inside with 4:59 left in the opening quarter. After that point, the Blue Devils cut the gap down to three. The first time came about 14 seconds later on an Isaac Kolczynski layin and converted free throw off a foul while attempting the layup. The Blue Devils were within 8-5 at that point, and only trailed 15-10 after an Andrew Forster layin with 24 seconds left in the opening quarter.

The Blue Devils cut the gap down to three more time. The final time came on a breaking layup by Kolczynski, making it a 19-16 Holy lead. However, Holly went on a 13-2 run, blowing the Bronchos’ edge to 32-19 late in the opening half. The Blue Devils rarely saw the lead sneak out of double-digits after that point.

“We talked a ton about transition defense and not being in the dead zone,” Lake Fenton coach Jake Erway said. “We were just not doing our job on defense. We were jogging back to half-court instead of sprinting back to protect our basket. I know they had at least 10 transition points in the second quarter and that kept it from being a close game (at halftime).”

FOULS really hurt the Blue Devils as well. Miller and Jake Zielsinski suffered foul troubles, each having three in the first half. Miller, one of Lake Fenton’s most potent offensive players, played about eight minutes due to foul troubles. “It’s tough when Jalen Miller and Jake Zielsinski had three fouls in the first half,” Erway said. “Jalen is arguably our best player and I think he played eight minutes tonight. That hurts a ton. We had 20 turnovers and our goal was 13. Twenty is way too much.”

Kyle Woodruft finished with 18 points, while Paris Partee netted 10 points and grabbed five rebounds for Holly. Adam Tooley had a team-high 12 rebounds and five assists. Lake Fenton didn’t have a player who scored double-digits. Zielsinski finished with nine points with six of those coming in the fourth quarter. Colson finished with eight points.

Lake Fenton’s Chris Bell (left) tries to find a way to dribble by Holly’s Blake Stafnke in the Bronchos’ 74-48 victory on Tuesday.

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**SOBRIETY**

Continued from Page 7A

Sucher describes her life now as “wonderful.” She has accomplished things she never thought possible, such as earning her GED (General Education Diploma), going to college, earning an associate’s degree and starting her career as a remote medical coder from home.

“I am closer to my family than ever and this is all because I am sober,” Sucher said. “The long lasting friendships I have made on this journey will be with me forever. Helping others is what I live for now, always giving back what others have given me over the years. I couldn’t ask for anything more in my life.

But it wasn’t always this way.

“I started drinking at the age of 21,” said Sucher. “I did sneak wine coolers before that age but my drinking really took flight on my 21st birthday and lasted up until my last DUI (driving under the influence).”

Sucher entered the court system in approximately 2003 when she got her first drunk driving ticket.

“It all went downhill from there,” she said. “I ended up getting three drunk drivings all together, but was blessed to have two of them run concurrently with each other so I did not face a felony.”

Sucher’s problems started when she quit school while in the 11th grade and continued making bad choices.

“The result of that as I got older was very low self esteem and just thinking that I was just not smart enough,” Sucher said. “This is when I started drinking heavily to numb the pain of not being good enough. Drinking gave me courage and made me more outgoing. Now I know that I can do all those things sober.”

Sobriety Court is an intense program.

“You have to do Breath-A-lyzers, random drug tests, counseling, AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) three times a week to daily, get a GED and a job, and attend routine appointments with your probation officer and routine court hearings with your judge,” said Sucher. “It was very intense but for me, that is what I needed.”

Sucher said her parents gave her tremendous support.

“I am so grateful for my mom taking me to all my appointments and also going to all the court hearings,” she said.

“One of my favorite parts of Sobriety Court, oddly enough, was the court hearings with my judge at the time, Dana Fortinberry. She was so invested in this program and in us. She pushed us because she knew we could accomplish amazing things if we just tried.

“Tremember saying to her at the end of Sobriety Court, thank you for everything, I am so grateful,” Sucher said.

“Her response to me and I carry this with me to this day was ‘you did the work.’”

Continued on next page
“Sobriety Court made me take a long look at myself and do what I needed to do to make me a better person,” she added. “My life was falling apart before Sobriety Court, but with the court and all of the people that make this program happen, I got another chance to be who I always wanted to be. You get what you put into it and the more you open up and try to face your issues during this whole process, the better you will become.”

What would have happened without Sobriety Court?

“I don’t like to think of ‘what if’ because I believe that everything happens for a reason and I thank God every day for Sobriety Court and all the wonderful people that helped me along the way,” said Sucher. “I will say though that I probably would have continued drinking and making very poor decisions that would have ended in jail time or death.”

Jenny’s judge

Former Oakland County Judge Dana Fortinberry said, “Sobriety Court was, without a doubt, the most rewarding program I participated in during my time as judge of the 52-2 District Court.

“Working together with the probation department, the prosecuting attorney, the defense bar and many generous and supportive community members, we provided a strict framework in which offenders struggling with alcohol addiction could get sober and reclaim their lives.

“As these determined program participants attained and maintained sobriety, they also became loving and stable family members, excellent employees, great role models for other program participants and very productive members of society. These are accomplishments most of them never thought they could make happen in their lives, but each success in the program added self confidence, which then fueled even more success.

“Our bi-weekly courtroom sessions were filled with serious discussions about life choices, but also with laughter and tears of joy,” Fortinberry said. “I’m still in touch with several of our program graduates, and I’m always amazed when they thank me. I tell them honestly that it is I who should be thanking them. The determination and courage they demonstrated allowed their individual journeys to sobriety are imprinted upon my heart forever.”

Fortinberry said when she retired from the bench, the Sobriety Court program had a 94 percent graduation rate and a zero percent recidivism rate.

“That means no one came out of the program and got arrested again for drunk driving, which is obviously a huge benefit to the community,” said Fortinberry.

Of her graduate, Jenny Sucher, she said, ‘Jenny is an amazing young lady who truly accomplished a complete 180-degree turn in her life while she was in the program. I respect her immensely and I think everyone will know why when they read her story.’
**A walk through the Old Testament**

By Tim Jagielo

tjagielo@tctimes.com; 810-433-6795

Tyrone Twp. — The Old Testament prophets were alive and well at the Tyrone Covenant Presbyterian Church Jesus Walk, held last weekend.

On Saturday at dusk, the fog and lilting music created a mystical atmosphere.

Families were led by lantern through the wooded trails to hear from many Old Testament character portrayals, including Zecharia, who was visited by the angel Gabriel.

Zecharia was portrayed by Pastor Jim Mascow, who was enjoying the balmy weather. “We’re used to blizzards,” he said, breaking character after a group had moved on. “We do this regardless of the weather.”

There are several stations, all set up in large, re-purposed construction forms for concrete, played by members of the church. The shepherds have real livestock, which include sheep, goats and alpacas.

The nativity was also live — save for the doll in place of baby Jesus.

The walk’s final station represented Christ in the modern world, and groups were then led back inside for snacks and light refreshments.

Preparation for the annual event takes all year, but kicks off in November.

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- $199 PER MONTH

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For the event, Joseph was portrayed by Kyle Jacobs, and the Virgin Mary by Hannah Clement. The manger featured actual animals that were tended to between group stops. See more photos online at tctimes.com.

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<td>2015 SCION TC</td>
<td>125512</td>
<td>$14,500</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500LTZ</td>
<td>1332100A</td>
<td>$16,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015 CHEVROLET SPARK</td>
<td>1215654A</td>
<td>$18,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010 CHEVROLET MALIBU LT</td>
<td>1115302B</td>
<td>$9,900</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 CHEVROLET SONIC L TZ</td>
<td>9804236</td>
<td>$12,996</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Used Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Stock#</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Reduced?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 CHEVROLET CRUZE LIMITED SEDAN</td>
<td>8181388A</td>
<td>$39/39 PER MONTH LEASE</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 CHEVROLET TRAVERSE</td>
<td>11143995</td>
<td>$143/143 PER MONTH LEASE - DEMO</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016 CHEVROLET EQUINOX</td>
<td>11128707</td>
<td>$128/128 PER MONTH LEASE</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 4WD, LT LOADED ALL-STAR</td>
<td>11432022</td>
<td>$169/169 PER MONTH LEASE</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015 CHEVROLET MALIBU</td>
<td>8181388A</td>
<td>$54/54 PER MONTH LEASE</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 CHEVROLET COLORADO</td>
<td>70903461</td>
<td>$230/230 PER MONTH LEASE</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 CHEVROLET IMPALA</td>
<td>70903461</td>
<td>$22,897</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015 CHEVROLET SPARK</td>
<td>70903461</td>
<td>$12,996</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sales Hours
- **Mon & Thurs:** 8:30am - 8pm
- **Tues, Wed & Fri:** 8:30am - 6pm
- **Saturday:** 10am - 4pm • **Sunday:** CLOSED

### Service Hours
- **Monday:** 7:00am - 8pm
- **Tuesday - Fri:** 7:00am - 6pm
- **Saturday:** 8am - 2pm • **Sunday:** CLOSED

### Christmas Hours
- **Closed Christmas Eve**
- **Closed Christmas Day**

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**TO ALL OUR LOYAL CUSTOMERS, FRIENDS AND FAMILIES: HAVE A SAFE & MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

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