

Akl sentenced to minimum of 57 months

■ 19-year-old has been behind bars for three and a half years, has 730 days of jail credit

By Sharon Stone

Abdurrahman “Abdu” Ahmed Akl, 19, was sentenced

Friday, Sept. 4 by Genesee County Circuit Court Judge David Newblatt in the March 4, 2017 shooting death of Brady Alan Morris, who was 18 at the time of the shooting.

Through a plea agreement between prosecution and defense, Akl pleaded guilty Aug. 13 to an

amended charge of manslaughter rather than open murder. Manslaughter carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison and/or \$7,500 in fines. Akl also pleaded guilty to felony firearm, which carries a mandatory two years imprisonment.

See **AKL** on 9



Times file photo of Abdurrahman “Abdu” Ahmed Akl



PAGE 11
FENTON FALL
TEAMS DOMINATE
TOP THREE SPOTS
IN TRI-COUNTY
TOP 16

Midweek Times

VOL. 27 NO. XXXVI

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

\$1.00

Local Ladies Night Out events postponed or canceled

■ ‘It’s definitely a tough landscape right now’

By Hannah Ball

Ladies Night Out might not happen this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Michael Hart, Fenton assistant city manager and Downtown Development Authority (DDA) director, said the pandemic has forced many events and activities to cancel.

“Ladies Night, to my knowledge, is not going on,” he said.

The city is “tentatively” looking at having Witches Night Out in October. Fenton’s Open Book

See **LADIES** on 10

Hometown Heroes



Holly High School graduate James Welch cuts his yellow ribbon from a tree in front of Holly Elementary. Each ribbon represents a Holly area resident who’s actively serving in the military. Welch returned home from serving in the Navy last month. See story on Page 3. Photo: Hannah Ball

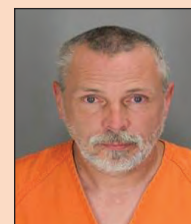
Bond denied for Springfield Township man

■ Charged with first-degree homicide of live-in girlfriend and felony firearm

By Sharon Stone

Vincent Merrill, 50, of Springfield Township, was arraigned Sunday, Sept. 6 by Magistrate Robert Morad of the Oakland County 52-1 District Court on one count of first-degree homicide and one count of felony firearm.

See **HOMICIDE** on 7



Vincent Merrill



“Some of this anger in this paper is unbelievable. Respect and value differences. Whether Republican or

Democrat, liberal or conservative, accept the outcome of elections and those who are elected. Let freedom ring.”



“Kudos to the local Knights of Columbus for recognizing someone

outside of their religion — Jason Pellet. A truly great organization of brotherly love.”



“Nice work to the mom in the library parking lot with three kids on devices. Way to make it work.”



Hurley Children's Hospital celebrates campaign success

■ Gives credit to area credit unions and CO-OP Miracle Match

Hurley Children's Hospital partnered with five area credit unions to "CHANGE a Child's Life" from Aug. 17-28. In a surprise announcement, CO-OP Financial Services announced a Miracle Match donation toward this collaborative effort.

CO-OP Financial Services, co-opfs.

org, is a payment and financial technology company whose mission is ensuring the success of the credit union movement.

Prior to the CO-OP Miracle Match donation, the "CHANGE a Child's Life" campaign had raised just over \$18,000. This total included money raised by the members and employees at ELGA Credit Union, Financial Plus Credit Union, Sovita Credit Union, Security Credit Union, and PFCU Credit Union.

Thanks to the CO-OP Financial

Services donation, a total of \$36,218 was raised for this area's local Children's Miracle Network Hospital.

"CO-OP congratulates our four client credit unions and the other organizations and community members that made this campaign a success," said Joe Franklin, vice president of experiential marketing and engagement for CO-OP. "We are looking forward to another year of supporting Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, to ensure children receive the

medical care they deserve.

This donation is especially impactful to Children's Miracle Network programs at Hurley Children's Hospital in 2020 since several of the hospital's annual CMN events have been altered and postponed.

"We are so appreciative of all that credit unions and CO-OP Financial Services have done for Hurley Children's Hospital over the years," said Melany Gavulic, president and CEO of Hurley Medical Center. "We sincerely value the outpouring of support and love for Hurley Children's Hospital and want to thank every single person who cared enough about these children to take the time to share our message and donate."



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BUSINESS BRIEFS

COMPILED BY SHARON STONE

McLaren Flint welcomes podiatric surgeon to medical staff

Ashim Wadehra, DPM, a podiatric surgeon, has joined the medical staff at McLaren Flint. Wadehra is seeing patients at Insight Orthopedic Specialists, 4800 S. Saginaw St., Suite 1815, Flint. Wadehra completed a fellowship in foot and ankle surgery with a



Ashim Wadehra,
DPM

specialization in reconstructive surgery at American Health Network Foot and Ankle in Carmel, Indiana. He completed his residency at Beaumont Hospital, Wayne in Wayne. He earned his medical degree from Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine in North Chicago, Illinois. Wadehra is accepting new patients and can be reached by calling (810) 484-3006.

One is welcomed home, another receives a cheerful sendoff

■Holly organization takes one ribbon off active duty tree; another ribbon is put on

By Hannah Ball

Holly — On Saturday, Sept. 5, the Hometown Support for All on Active Duty organization welcomed one military member back from service and cheered for one who left for basic training on Tuesday.

This program organizes memorable sendoffs for Holly area residents leaving for active duty. They write the names of these people on a yellow ribbon and tie it around a tree in front of the Holly Elementary School. They started doing this September 2019.

The large tree now has approximately 40 yellow ribbons around it. Organizers of the group, James and Ina Golden, who are both veterans, invited James Welch, 23, to remove his ribbon Saturday. Right after, Holly graduate Vaughn Liegl, 18, put his ribbon on the tree.

Welch returned from the Navy about a month ago.

A crowd of two dozen people cheered at the event.

“I love (being home). I miss it. I’d rather be here than at sea. It’s far away



Vaughn Liegl, 18, receives congratulations from Ina and James Golden after they put his ribbon on the tree. He left for basic training Tuesday, Sept. 8. Photo: Hannah Ball

from family, being away from home, not knowing where you’re going to end up,” he said.

Welch, who graduated from Holly High School in 2015, was gone for five years and one month while he handled aircrafts on carriers at sea. His rank is ABHAN, which stands for Aviation Boatswain’s Mate Aircraft Handler Airman.

See **RIBBON** on 8

“My town put my name on a tree saying that I served in the military. I was proud of it.”

James Welch
Holly resident

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Building Brands

The home office is still an office

The other day a friend received an official memo from her company detailing a new rule: No more introducing your pets during video meetings.

I'm sure that's a memo the CEO of her company never imagined having to write, but then again 2020 has been full of "we never imagined" moments.

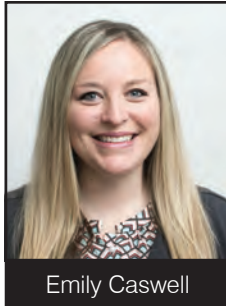
I'm not sure I fully agree with the new rule. I am a pet lover, after all. Plus, if your pets are anything like mine, sometimes they bark during a meeting (usually just at the moment I've unmuted myself) and it only seems natural to address the "dog" in the room. But I get the general idea.

As millions of workers transitioned from a traditional office to their home office during COVID-19, there hasn't really been time for an HR department meeting on proper home office etiquette. I'm not going to pretend I have it all figured out, but here are some tips that have helped me

make the home office a little more professional.

If at all possible find dedicated space for a home office.

Invest in a few pieces of technology to make your job easier.



Emily Caswell

A home office is still an office: I've heard stories of people laying down in bed on video calls, or fully reclined in a chair or wearing a bathrobe. By all means, be comfortable in your home office but remember you're still on the clock.

Stay on a schedule:

This one has been easy in our household since my husband is an essential worker who can't work from home (there are many of you and I am so thankful for each and every one of you!) He still has a 6 a.m. wake up call. So instead of staying in bed for two more hours, which I could easily do and still login to work on time, I get up with him, get him out the door and start my day.

The beauty of working from

home is that this does not mean I'm constantly working a 12-hour day. Yes, some days call for that (just as they did before COVID) but most days I'm able to take breaks throughout the day to: walk the dogs, do laundry, prep dinner or visit with friends via text.

This leads me to another topic: I really like working from home! I finally have time to accomplish things I never had time for before. No more guilt that I never cook a meal and our laundry is never caught up.

I'm not alone. The Today Show recently cited a New York Times survey of 1,000 remote workers that found that 86 percent of those people were happy to continue working from home, even when that meant balancing distractions like kids and — of course — pets.

There's no way to know how much longer working from home will be a thing, but for now I'm going to embrace it — as professionally as possible. That said, my dogs are Buddy and Yeti and they promise to try to be quiet during video meetings.

Hotlines

*Submit Hot lines online at myfenton.com
or text to 509-771-5295*

All submissions, if approved for publication, must be 50 words or less and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tri-County Times. We reserve the right to edit for clarity, length and liability.

FROM MY OBSERVATION of the severely faded paint for the right lane on Silver Lake Road for southbound U.S. 23 is supposed to be a right turn only lane? Also, there is no sign indicating such, nor lane ends merge left.

■■■
PEOPLE ARE LEAVING New York and California to get away from the BS and taxes but they're not coming here.

■■■
COVID REPORTING: MY mom died June 4 at age 93. She did not die from COVID-19. Hospice was with her every day and said she died from old age, not COVID-19. Death certificate listed pulmonary, respiratory and COVID-19. Follow the money. It's worth \$17,000 from feds to states, according to hospice supervisor.

■■■

Compiled by Hannah Ball, staff reporter — Question asked to Tri-County Times' Facebook followers

What was your favorite class in high school?

| streettalk



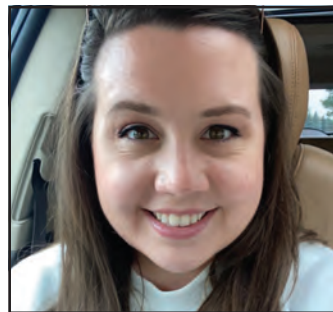
"AP Literature with George Kralosky at Fenton High School. I hope he is doing well."

Ryan Tackabury
Flint



"Video. I enjoyed it because I liked making videos for the school and meeting new people and making people smile."

Sam Smith
Linden



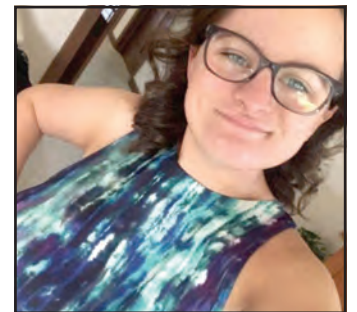
"Anatomy. I had a really enthusiastic teacher. She taught me a lot and set me up for my classes in college and my career as a nurse. I try to channel her when I'm providing education to my patients."

Morgan Maker
Linden



"Journalism and Mrs. Webster. I was the editor of The Anchor's Chain at Lake Fenton. Because I love to write, that's my gift."

Amber Naganashe
Fenton



"I loved my English classes. I loved my teachers and the activities we did in the classes. I enjoyed all of my classes but English the most."

Emma Ziraldo
Fenton

Sheriff shares 'thank you'

■ Livingston County man pens letter of frustration, thanks law enforcement

By Sharon Stone

Livingston County Sheriff Mike Murphy shared a "thank you" note that was posted on Nextdoor, a community based website and app. He said it was shared with overwhelming support.

Murphy said, "In light of negative discussion about defunding police and the blatant display of disrespect for law enforcement in general," Kurt Skarjune, a Livingston County resident, posted the thank you note to police on his local Nextdoor.

The sheriff added that on Sept. 2, law enforcement leaders gathered at the sheriff's office in Howell to be recognized by supporters and to extend their gratitude to the citizens they serve.

Following is Skarjune's thank you letter: "For those of us sick and tired of the nightly violence and mayhem we see in our once proud cities, which one of us can even imagine how battle-weary our police officers are being part of it and not watching it like we do on our big screen TVs? How do they endure? Truth is, they can't.

Scores of officers are retiring early (if they can) or quitting out-right, giving up

good paying jobs with good benefits, just when we, the public, need them the most.

Back in the '80s, when I started, such was not the case. Optimistic young people flocked to the openings where there were always at least 100 job seekers for every one or two jobs. Why? It was a noble job, and still is, giving one a great opportunity to help people.

Fast forward to now and you see a career where one opening may draw only two or three applicants. Pay and benefits are still good, but not good enough to get hit in the head with a brick or have bags of urine thrown in your face. Now, mayors and city councils believe the criminals before they believe you. Now, you are a second-class citizen who is 'guilty until proven innocent' and now you are required to wear a camera 24/7. The only backup you get comes from your partners standing at your side.

Even through all of this, our men and women in Blue, Brown or Black, know that there is a 'silent majority' who want and need them around. What this silent majority doesn't know is that just a couple of encouraging words like 'thank you for your service' can go a long way. I know, because I received these same words 13 years after I retired. Let's not make our current heroes wait quite that long.

Back the Blue!"

Macy's store attacker sentenced

■ Two years probation for aggravated assault on store employee

By Sharon Stone

Damire Palmer, 18, of Mt. Morris Township was sentenced Friday, Sept. 4 in Genesee County Circuit Court to two years probation.

On Aug. 12, he appeared in the Genesee County 67th District Court for his preliminary hearing. Through a plea agreement, Palmer pleaded guilty to assaulting a 50-year-old manager working in the men's clothing department at Macy's department store at Genesee Valley Mall in Flint Township on June 15.

The Macy's store at Genesee Valley Mall is the closest Macy's to the tri-county area and frequented by tri-county area residents.

The charge will be reduced to an aggravated assault misdemeanor upon completion of his probation.

The judge said the victim has agreed to this deal.

Palmer will serve 180 days in the county jail on an unrelated case, with credit for the 57 days he has already served, in addition to two years probation.

The assault was caught on store surveillance video as well as a cellphone video made by Palmer's brother, which went viral after he shared it on social media.

As previously reported in the Times, Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said that despite public comments on social media, the police investigation did not uncover any evidence of provocation by the store manager.

"This was an unprovoked attack on a Macy's employee," Leyton said in July upon Palmer's arrest. "This behavior as seen on the video is unacceptable, it is criminal, and it cannot be allowed."

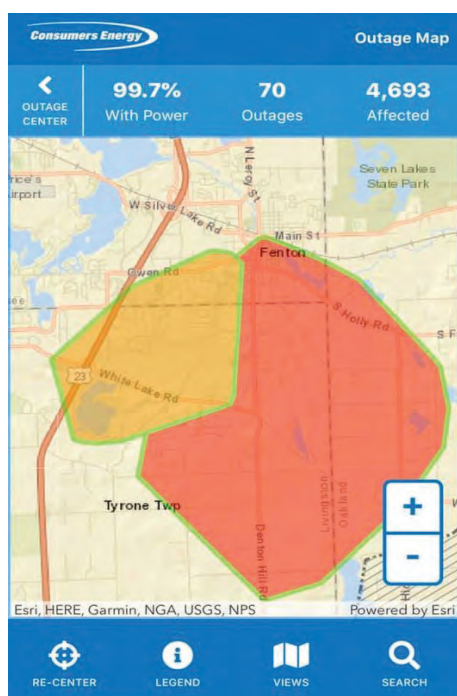
See **MACY'S** on 7

NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED BY SHARON STONE

POWER OUTAGE ON TUESDAY

Shortly after 10 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 8, more than 1,000 Consumers Energy customers in the south end of Fenton City and south into Tyrone Township lost power. There were reports of an explosion-like sound in downtown Fenton at the time of the power outage. Consumers Energy crews responded to a small power station near Lemen and Caroline streets. Residents were told that power was expected to be restored at 2:15 p.m.



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HOT LINE CONTINUED

WHY DO YOU want the Times to be a conservative paper when you have a president who is not conservative? Why are you all so angry? You have controlled the presidency and the senate for four years. Find comfort in knowing you live in Trump's America.

ALL YOU MORONS stating the odds of dying from COVID-19. I'm not afraid I don't believe in gambling with my life. The odds of being hit by lightning are 1 in 1,222,000. Do you go out and stand under a tree or in an open field during a lightning storm?

A SPECIAL SHOUT-out and thank you to Fenton Home Furnishings for the wonderful assistance they gave me with my couch. Great hometown service.

IGNORANCE AND RACISM on naked display in the Hot lines. Being a 'white Caucasian male' does not add the authority or legitimacy to your Hot line that you think it does. But it does reveal inherent bigotry and sexism.

SEARCHED THE WEB, found no data rationalizing the murder of nursing home residents. Who's ignorant now? We all are because Whitmer won't give up the data.

TO THE HOT-LINER who 'evaluated several FOIA requests.' Thanks for your 'several' expertise. Covering one's political butt is not a legitimate reason for denial of multiple, fully vetted FOIA requests. There is no publically available information to justify the nursing home murder of 2,000 Michiganders. Hence the FOIA. Try again.

DURING AN ERA of budget cuts, Fenton City Council passed resolution 2020-27 to accept the financial costs of maintenance and liability for the LAFF pathway. They can't pay for neighborhood streets, but we can afford to pay for regional pathway? Crazy.

WHAT IS GOING on downtown? Put in the nice Cornerstone building then the modern Horizon Building and 111 Building ruined the look. What were the city planners thinking?

**Mark McCabe**

67th District Court

Ask the

judge**Sept. 11, 2001**

If you were old enough, Sept. 11, 2001 is one of those days when you remember exactly where you were when you first heard the news.

I was certainly old enough and I was in court.

We now call this day 9/11.

As I'm sure most of us know, there were thousands of innocent people who died that day and in the days thereafter. However, due to the actions of some incredible heroes, many lives were saved.

Today I'd like to share two of the many hero stories.

There were three jets, which individually struck the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. There was also a fourth hijacked jet, which crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania on its way to Washington, D.C. targeting the Capitol Building or the White House.

This crash was as a result of the passengers overcoming all odds and taking control of the plane from the hijackers. They were led by four men, including one Todd Beamer, who famously told the rest "Let's Roll" before they stormed the cockpit. Tragically, all of the passengers died, but Washington, D.C. was spared.

Rick Rescorla was a highly decorated Vietnam veteran who grew up in the United Kingdom. When his men were under fire, he would often sing to them to keep them calm.

On 9/11, he was the head of corporate security for Morgan Stanley in the South Tower. When the first jet hit the North Tower he was told to keep the employees at their desks. He knew that was wrong and instead ordered everyone to leave the building. While they were evacuating, he calmly reassured them by singing "God Bless America" and the British song "Men of Harlech" over a bullhorn.

Sixteen minutes after the first

BUSINESS

BRIEFS

COMPILED BY SHARON STONE

Sovita Credit Union announces second annual 'YES to People' classroom giveaway

Fifty local teachers will be awarded \$100 grants through nominations by their peers. This initiative is part of a larger "YES to People" campaign Sovita Credit Union launched to support local causes that advance education and healthcare. Sovita will award 50 \$100 checks to teachers in Genesee and Lapeer counties to use in their classrooms for supplies, programs or any initiative for which they are passionate. Nominations can be made by completing an application and returning it via email, in person or by mail by Sept. 15. Applications can be found at sovitacu.org. Any person who is a member of Sovita Credit Union or who is employed in the field of education or healthcare can nominate a teacher. Completed applications can be returned to the credit union by Sept. 15. Grant recipients will be selected during the last week of September and the funds will be delivered to each recipient. Sovita Credit Union is proud to celebrate people who bring life to the community and advance the well-being of others. Additional information about the program can be found at sovitacu.org. Sovita Credit Union serves education and healthcare workers, their families and their communities in Genesee, Lapeer, Livingston, Oakland and Shiawassee counties.

plane hit, the second plane struck the South Tower. By then over 2,700 employees and visitors had been evacuated thanks to Mr. Rescorla.

During the evacuation, he had called his wife to tell her he loved her and if anything happened to him, she had made his life. He was last seen on the 10th floor of the South Tower heading upward making sure everyone was safely out. His body was never found.

This Friday marks the 19th anniversary of 9/11.

Let us never forget.



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NEWS

BRIEFS

COMPILED BY SHARON STONE

Reminder: open burning prohibited in Fenton Township

With the arrival of autumn, Fenton Township officials would like to take this opportunity to remind residents that open burning is illegal in Fenton Township. The only exceptions to the open burning ban are as follows:

- **Owners of large** agricultural properties, (10 acres or larger), may apply for a burning permit for the purpose of clearing agricultural land. The Fenton Township fire chief shall make the final determination regarding the issuance of any such burning permit.
- **Small recreational fires** or “campfires,” (no larger than 3- by 3-feet wide and 3-feet high), for outdoor cooking are also allowed and do not require a permit.

All other outdoor burning, including large recreational fires (bonfires) and the burning of leaves, is strictly prohibited. It is also important to note that it is illegal to burn leaves or grass clippings under any circumstances, even in an otherwise legal campfire.

POLICE & FIRE

REPORT

COMPILED BY SHARON STONE

DON'T FALL VICTIM TO PHONE SCAMS

Livingston County Sheriff Mike Murphy is warning everyone of a scam involving phone calls from people claiming to be with law enforcement. A “deputy” called an individual and told that individual that there was an arrest warrant for them and they would have to send money. Another individual reported a similar call to the sheriff’s office. Murphy reminds everyone never to give money, gift cards, Green dot, wire transfers, or any personal information over the phone. Murphy added, “We do not call saying you’ve got a warrant, we show up.”

HOT LINE CONTINUED

MY GUESS IS very few people accepted the bald statement that a man died in an auto accident and COVID-19 was listed as the cause of death. You’re going to have to prove that one. It sounds like nonsense to me.

I SUPPORT FENTON’S restaurants doing outside dining. With the road closing, trying to turn left from northbound Adelaide onto Shiawassee is nearly impossible. It would be nice if Fenton police would direct traffic at that intersection during the shutdown.

HOMICIDE

Continued from Front Page

Bond was denied. Merrill’s next court date has been set for Sept. 14 at the 52-2 District Court.

Merrill’s case goes back to Thursday, Sept. 3 at 5:52 p.m., when the Oakland County Operations Center received a 911 call from a caller, later identified as Merrill, who stated, “I just killed my girlfriend” and then hung up the phone.

The victim has been identified as Vicki Diane Fortin.

Oakland County Undersheriff Mike McCabe said deputies responded to the scene in Springfield Township and found a 50-year-old man, Merrill, standing in the driveway outside the residence. Merrill told the responding deputy, “I shot her. I killed her.”

Deputies entered the residence and found a 60-year-old female, later identified as Fortin, lying on the floor with no sign of life. She was believed to be the suspect’s live-in girlfriend. Fortin had sustained multiple gunshot wounds. An ER doctor at McLaren Oakland Hospital in Pontiac pronounced her deceased.

A .380 semi-automatic handgun, which is believed to be the weapon used in the homicide, was found on a table in the basement. Merrill remains lodged at the Oakland County Jail.

MACY’S

Continued from Page 5

In district court, Palmer testified that he had asked the store employee a question about clothing. He said his brother, who was with him in the store,

told him that the employee called him a racial slur, which upset Palmer.

Angered, Palmer testified that he assaulted the employee. He said his brother later told him that the employee had not said anything.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL FOR THE AUDUBON MEADOWS STREET IMPROVEMENT SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FENTON, GENESEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

TO THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF FENTON TOWNSHIP, GENESEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN, THE OWNERS OF LAND WITHIN THE AUDUBON MEADOWS STREET IMPROVEMENT SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT, AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that that Supervisor and assessing officer of the township has reported to the township board and filed in the office of the Township Clerk for public examination a special assessment roll prepared by her covering all properties within the Audubon Meadows Street Improvement Special Assessment District benefited by the proposed street improvement project. Said assessment roll has been prepared for the purpose of assessing the costs of repaving Audubon Drive, Rolling Meadow Drive and Waterside Drive, and work incidental thereto within the aforesaid special assessment district as more particularly shown on the plans on file with the Township Clerk at 12060 Mantawauka Drive, Fenton, Michigan within the township, which assessment is in the total amount of \$55,000.05.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the assessing officer has further reported that the assessment against each parcel of land within said district is such relative portion of the whole sum levied against all parcels of land in said district as the benefit to such parcels bears to the total benefit to all parcels of land in said district.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the township board will meet on Monday September 21, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. by telephone conference call (Phone Number: (844) 855-4444, Access code: 323110#) for the purpose of reviewing said special assessment roll and hearing any objections thereto. Said roll may be examined on the Fenton Township website at www.fentontownship.org from now until after said hearing. Protest at the hearing held to confirm the special assessment roll is required in order to appeal the amount of the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

An owner, or party in interest, or his or her agent may attend the hearing by telephone to protest the special assessment, or shall be permitted to file his or her appearance or protest by letter and his or her attendance by telephone shall not be required. (The owner or any person having an interest in the real property who protests in person or in writing at the hearing may file a written appeal of the special assessment with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 35 days after the confirmation of the special assessment roll.)

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Approximately two dozen people attended the ceremony Saturday, Sept. 5, organized by Hometown Support for All on Active Duty. **Photo: Hannah Ball**

RIBBON

Continued from Page 3

Welch left for the service right after high school and returned in August. He's been looking for work and hanging with his friends and family while he's been back.

"They're so happy for me to come back. I was so happy to come back, too," he said.

Welch was able to come back about three times in that five years, and he would stay for around two weeks to a month. He was stationed in Japan for three years before being sent to San Diego.

"I wasn't here when they did this," he said, referring to the ribbon on the tree with his name on it. "I had seen pictures and I was like, 'oh, I didn't even know my name was on a ribbon.' I found out when I was in the middle of deployment. As family came and took photos of it, I was more proud of it. My town put my name on a tree saying that I served in the military. I was proud of it."

Welch said he was "very excited" to take the ribbon off.

Vaughn Leigl, 18, a graduate of Holly High School, left for basic training Tuesday, Sept. 8, which he'll do at Fort Jackson in South Carolina.

"I'm ready to go," he said on Saturday after his ribbon was put on the tree.

Leigl has known he's wanted to join the Army since he was 4 years old. His father also served in the Army, which was one of his biggest inspirations for



The tree is home to 40 ribbons currently, all with a name and branch of service of someone actively serving. **Photo: Hannah Ball**

enlisting. After 10 weeks of basic training, he'll go to San Antonio, Texas, for training in cybersecurity.

"I love computers. I rip apart and build my computer almost every week. It's fun," he said.

After his ribbon was put up, he said, "It was cool. I hadn't ever seen anything like this. I didn't expect anything like this."

The Goldens, from the Holly Area Veterans Resource Center, started this program for active duty military members because they wanted to show that the community supports them. The organization sends care packages to active duty members, and helps veterans by contacting Helmets to Hardhats, an organization that helps active duty and transitioning service members find work.

AKL

Continued from Front Page

On Friday, Sept. 4, Newblatt sentenced Akl to a minimum of 57 months up to 180 months, which is the statutory maximum sentence. Akl also was sentenced to a mandatory two years for felony firearm.

Akl was arrested the night of the shooting and with bond denied, has been in custody at the Genesee Valley Regional Center ever since.

Since Akl has been in custody since the night of the shooting, or approximately three years and six months, he would be credited those days already served to go toward the two-year mandatory sentence for felony firearm.

Circuit Court Judge David Newblatt told Akl that whatever number of days is left over beyond the two years would go toward his sentence in manslaughter.

Russell and Robin Morris, Brady's parents, attended the sentencing. Prior to hearing Akl's sentence, Robin read a letter to Judge Newblatt. In her statement, Robin said that Akl is a sociopath who stole their son's life. "Brady didn't deserve to be murdered," she said. "How do you accidentally shoot someone? It wasn't an accident."

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Jen Janetsky said that because there would be no trial, the Morris' were unable to be heard and they were unable to hear directly from Akl on what happened the night of the shooting. "The family wants to know what happened," she said. "They don't understand. We ask for the highest possible sentence."

Akl's defense attorney, Frank Manley, said, "My client is not a sociopath and murderer. He was a kid. They're kids. We need to stay on facts. Brady wasn't a saint." Manley added that Brady lived at the Akls home for two months prior to the shooting and they were good friends. "They were kids doing things they shouldn't be doing. There are no facts that he intended to kill his friend."

Akl also took the opportunity to speak during his sentencing. He said, "I haven't lied about anything. ... I also hurt my family and I'd like to

apologize. I'm really sorry, your honor. I was being stupid. If I could switch places, I would.

"I have to show others that this is not the way to be. I want to be a positive person. I have learned from my mistake. I wish I could turn time back."

Newblatt was assigned to this case in February and told the courtroom that he did not know Brady, however, he has read the many letters from Brady's family and friends and saw a photo of Brady from when he was a small boy. He said he felt like he got to know Brady. He added that one letter he received from the Morris' was signed, "from the heartbroken parents of Brady Morris."

The judge said the characteristics of Brady described by his family and friends that stood out to him included "funny, kind-hearted and goofy."

Newblatt said he felt the Akl family should

have been aware of some of what was going on in their home.

"What did the family know? What was going on? This was not an accident; it was more than an accident," Newblatt said. "The most telling fact was the contact to the back of the head." He added that if he were Brady's family, he would think Akl was a cold-blooded murderer and sociopath. "I don't blame them for feeling this," he said.

"But it's not what I see. There's no motive for Mr. Akl to do what he did. Mr. Akl invited Brady to live with his family. They were good friends. It makes no sense. I have to follow the evidence."

Newblatt compared Akl's behavior to foolish bravado. "His behavior was dangerous. I don't know why the family tolerated his behavior," he said.

To calculate Akl's sentence, Newblatt said he took into account Akl's age of 16 at the time of the shooting, the remorse he exhibited from the police vehicle dash cam, and his maturing behavior at the juvenile detention center.

Night of the shooting

The Genesee County Sheriff's deputies and Fenton police responded to Akl's home at 14170 Moffett Dr. on

Lake Fenton in Fenton Township at approximately 11 p.m. on March 4, 2017 in response to a 911 call regarding a male with a gunshot wound to the head.

Akl was immediately taken into custody. A semi-automatic Glock pistol was found on the front porch and secured by police.

The two teens, who were reportedly friends, were alone on the first floor of the residence when the shooting occurred. Other members of Akl's family and one other guest were on the second and third floors.

According to the autopsy report, it appears that Morris was shot from behind at point blank range on the top left side of his head.

The initial 911 call, which was placed by Akl, and backseat police car footage was played during pretrial motions in district court in spring of 2018. It featured a "hysterical" Akl begging for "suicide by cop,"

and screaming at the 911 dispatcher, "I literally killed my friend."

Akl responds at plea hearing

During his plea hearing Aug. 13, Akl told the judge that Morris, who was living with the Akls, was "my best friend. I knew him from school." He told the judge that he and Morris had been playing around with the gun. Akl also admitted to smoking marijuana that night. They would take turns shooting. "I thought the gun was empty. I loved Brady. It went off and I realized it was loaded," he said.

One round had been in the chamber.

"He was my best friend. It hurt me. It hurt my family," he said.

Despite having used guns in the past, Akl acknowledged that on the night of the fatal shooting he had not checked the chamber to see if it was empty.

“I have to show others that this is not the way to be. I want to be a positive person. I have learned from my mistake. I wish I could turn time back.”

**Abdurrahman
“Abdu” Ahmed Akl**



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LADIES

Continued from Front Page

has the event planned for Friday, Oct. 9, according to the Facebook event page.

Hart said people will be walking around outside, and it will be up to the individual businesses whether they want to participate and how they would

run their store the night of the event.

They began to discuss holding the author series, when they invite local authors to speak at live events, but the Fenton Community and Cultural Center is still closed. Hart said they might still take place virtually.

"There's discussion regarding other events and activities," he said. "It's definitely a tough landscape right now."

The city and Southern Lakes Park and Recreation hosted Thursday Farmers Market throughout the summer, which Hart said have been going "very well."

"It was a great effort by the DDA and Southern Lakes. They did a great job. I think people appreciated the fact that we were able to keep that going this summer," he said.

The last Farmers Market will be Thursday, Sept. 10.

When it comes to Halloween and trick-or-treating, Hart said this takes place outside and it should be up to the discretion of parents if they want their kids to participate. The council does

work with the police department to set a curfew for safety reasons.

The Fenton DDA and Fenton City Council have not discussed it yet. When it gets closer to the date, Hart said they will look for guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the state of Michigan.

In Linden, Jeanine Sapelak, chairperson of the Linden DDA, said Ladies Night Out has been postponed.

"At this time, the DDA has postponed the Linden Ladies Night Out," she said. "We have discussed plans to possibly have this in the springtime. Discussions on this are still in progress."

They have not discussed plans for fall activities yet. The Linden DDA is in communication with the Fenton and Linden Regional Chamber of Commerce on a reopening campaign, Sapelak said. She's on this committee discussing ways to safely reopen.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FENTON GENESEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Notice of Public Hearing on the 2020 Special Assessment Roll for the Fenton Township Fire Protection Special Assessment District

To the residents and property owners of Fenton Township, Genesee County, Michigan, the owners of land within the Fenton Township Fire Protection Special Assessment District and any other interested persons:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that that supervisor and assessing officer of the township has reported to the township board and filed in the office of the Township Clerk for public examination a special assessment roll prepared by her covering all properties within the Fenton Township Fire Protection Special Assessment District. Said assessment roll has been prepared for the purpose of raising money by special assessment for furnishing fire protection, emergency and medical services, purchasing and housing equipment, and for the operation of same within the aforesaid assessment district, which assessment for 2020 is in the total approximate amount of \$528,320.00.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the assessing officer has further reported that the assessment against each parcel of land within said district is such relative portion of the whole sum levied against all parcels of land in said district as the benefit to such parcels bears to the total benefit to all parcels of land in said district.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the township board will meet held by telephone conference call, (Phone Number: (844) 855-4444, Access code: 323110#), on Monday September 21, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. for the purpose of reviewing said special assessment roll and hearing any objections thereto. Said roll may be examined at the office of the Township Clerk during regular business hours of regular business days until the time of said hearing and may further be examined on the Township's website at www.fentontownship.org. Appearance and protest at the hearing held to confirm the special assessment roll is required in order to appeal the amount of the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. An owner, or party in interest, or his or her agent may appear in person at the hearing to protest the special assessment, or shall be permitted to file his or her appearance or protest by letter and his or her personal appearance shall not be required. Written protests should be submitted in advance of the public hearing if possible. [The owner or any person having an interest in the real property who protests in person or in writing at the hearing may file a written appeal of the special assessment with the state tax tribunal within 35 days after the confirmation of the special assessment roll.]

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the township board of the Charter Township of Fenton shall, at the second (or final) regular township board meeting held in the month of September in each year, make a redetermination of the amount of the fire protection special assessment levy for the ensuing year without further notice, (except for compliance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act).

ROBERT E. KRUG
FENTON TOWNSHIP CLERK
12060 MANTAWAUKA DRIVE
FENTON, MI 48430-8817

NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED BY SHARON STONE

United Way of Genesee County receives grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Flint for 'Courageous Conversations on Race, Racism, and Radical Change'

The Community Foundation of Greater Flint awarded \$8,000 to the United Way of Genesee County, on behalf of Community Roots, for the "Courageous Conversations on Race, Racism, and Radical Change" project. The grant will allow Community Roots to facilitate four community conversations that aim to engage residents of Flint and Genesee County in a constructive dialogue on the negative impacts of race, and racism on public health and overall quality of life. The five-step process begins with, "The Vent," which is scheduled for the following:

- **Wednesday, Sept. 9**, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., via Zoom Video Conference
- **Thursday, Sept. 10**, 4 to 6 p.m., at Logan Park (corner of Barbara Drive and Allison Street, Flint)
- **Wednesday, Sept. 16**, 5 to 7 p.m., at Dewey Park (N, Saginaw and Damon streets)
- **Monday, Sept. 21**, 5 to 7 p.m., at Whaley Park (Dort Hwy. and Franklin Avenue)

Community Roots is a community development entity designed to catalyze and promote community change. Community Roots proprietors are longtime residents of Flint and Genesee County who are committed to authentic engagement and measureable change. For more information on the Courageous Conversations on Race, Racism, and Radical Change, contact Willie Smith, Jr. by telephone at (810) 221-3722 or via email at wsmithjr1@yahoo.com.

“We have discussed plans to possibly have this in the springtime.”

Jeanine Sapelak
*Linden DDA
Development Authority
chairperson*

Fenton cross country teams open season against Grand Blanc

The Fenton varsity cross country program began its season with a dual meet against the Grand Blanc Bobcats last week.

The varsity boys team defeated Grand Blanc by an 18-37 score while the varsity girls team lost by a 19-39 score.

The varsity boys cross country team earned five of the six top positions at the dual meet. Thirty-one Fenton boys finished the 3.1-mile race.

Senior Samuel Cox won the race with a time of 17:30.0, beating second-place

junior teammate Michael Crane (17:46.7) by nearly 17 seconds. Grand Blanc's Drew Balow (17:52.3) finished third but the next three runners were Tigers. They were junior Josh Maier (18:21.9) in fourth, Nathan Katic in fifth (18:33.3) and Aidan

Brzezinski in seventh (19:04.7). Noah Sage placed 12th (19:46.7) while Luke Defina placed 13th (19:58.7).

The Fenton girls had 15 runners finish the race.

CONTINUED AT [TCTIMES.COM](https://www.tctimes.com)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2020 | **PAGE 11** | [MYFENTON.COM/SPORTS](https://www.myfenton.com/sports)

Sports Times

Fenton fall teams dominate top three spots in Tri-County Top 16

By David Troppens

Usually when the sports staff reveals our top 16 polls for each school year, we take our time presenting a handful of teams each edition.

We do this for a couple of reasons. First off, it allows us to give each team a little more press when broken up into three or four stories over the course of a month. Second, it creates some suspense. There are other reasons, but these are the two biggies.

For the 2019-20 school year, we've taken this theory to a super extreme, letting the list extend into September. With the COVID-19 epidemic, it allowed us to make sure we had positive local content in the paper at a time when there wasn't a great deal of positive stories happening.

But by doing it this way, the

sports staff realizes we still have our top three teams to reveal in our 2019-20 Tri-County Top 16 Sports Team Poll. So with this being our last pretty decent break in the prep sports season coming up for awhile (yes, fall prep sports are back), we figured we better get this poll done in this edition.

No. 3 - Fenton varsity girls swimming and diving team: The Fenton girls have been in all but one of our top 16 polls during the 12 years we've been presenting the list.

Here's the amazing part, the girls weren't only No. 3 in our end-of-the-school-year-poll but the Tigers were the third-ranked team in the 2019 fall top 12 list. That tells everyone how strong the fall sports season traditionally is in the tri-county area.



The Fenton varsity boys soccer team finished No. 1 in our 2019-20 Tri-County Top 16 Poll after advancing to the D2 state semifinal contest in the fall of 2019.

The Fenton girls have always been a strong team within the tri-county area, but they improved upon the squad's state standards last fall. The Tigers dominated the Flint Metro League season with a 6-0 mark and crushed the

rest of the league in the league meet by scoring 688 points, almost 300 points ahead of second-place Owosso (395). The Tigers also won a key dual meet against Grand Blanc during the regular season.

The squad had a strong showing at the state meet as well. Gracie Olsen won state championships in the 200-yard free-style and the 100-yard butterfly while placing 11th overall in the

See TOP 16 on 12

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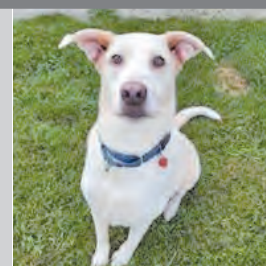
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TOP 16

Continued from Page 11

team standings. The girls should remain a team to watch out for this fall as well.

No. 2 - Fenton girls golf team: During the 2018-19 school year, the Fenton varsity girls golf team was our No. 1 squad in our poll. The Tigers made a great chase to defend their title last school year.

The strange thing about our No. 2 team is that the Tigers didn't win the Flint Metro League championship, something most would automatically assume would be the case for the No. 2 squad in our poll. The Tigers dominated the dual season of the Metro year, going 9-0, but lost to Goodrich by six strokes at the league meet, earning the Martians the overall title.

But the Tigers didn't let that bother them. Led by Brook Herbstreit, the Tigers had a strong postseason. Fenton qualified for the state meet by placing third in a strong regional meet with a team score of 362. Once at the D2 state meet, the Tigers finished in a tie for fifth at the two-day, 36-hole tournament with a score of 375-357-732. Meanwhile, Herbstreit placed in a tie for sixth individually with a score of 82-80-162.

No. 1 - Fenton boys soccer team:

The Tigers don't have a great history of finishing very high on our list. In fact, this is only the fourth time in the 12 years we've had our top 16 poll, and have finished in the top 10 only once. But that changed in 2019. The Tigers had an outstanding regular season, finishing in a three-way tie with Linden and Goodrich for the Flint Metro League championship.

Once the postseason started, the Tigers became an even stronger squad. The Tigers won a district title by beating Owosso 5-0 and then by beating the Linden Eagles 2-1 in a thrilling shootout in the district title. In regional action, the Tigers hosted the tournament and beat Madison Heights Lamphere 7-3 in the semifinal and then defeated Detroit Country Day 2-1 in the title match, earning a trip to the D2 state semifinal contest. While there, the Tigers faced Melvindale and were tied 1-1 at the end of regulation during a game played in the rain. However, Melvindale scored three goals in overtime, ending the Tigers' season one game short of the state title contest. The Tigers finished the season with a 16-6-1 overall record.

Blue Devils compete in second XC meet of season; Boys win three-team event

The Lake Fenton varsity cross country program competed in its second meet of the season with the Lake Fenton boys winning and the Lake Fenton girls placing second.

The Lake Fenton boys scored 26 points while Clio finished in second place with 32 points. Carman-Ainsworth was third with 78 points.

The Blue Devils had four of the top seven runners in the event, including the top two. Senior Joseph Gilbert won with a time of 17:18.09, while Kevin Lewis

was second in 17:28.05.

The rest of the Blue Devils' scoring five were Nolan Pinion in fifth (18:49.61), Matt Fletcher in seventh (19:28.32) and Nick Learman in 11th (19:59.19). The Blue Devils had seven runners within the top 13. The other two in the top seven were Jamison Chenett in 12th (20:41.10) and Nathan Niestroy in 13th (21:07.25).

The Lake Fenton girls scored 28 points, just one less than first-place Clio. Carman-Ainsworth was third with 81 points.

CONTINUED AT TCTIMES.COM

1984 Detroit Tigers finish off Blue Jays one final time in August

The magic number. It's what all Major League Baseball fans hope they can start charting for their favorite team when the calendar hits September.

The number represents the amount of wins by the first-place squad and the number of losses by the second-place team it will take for the first-place team to win the pennant. When talks of magic numbers start in early September, that pretty much means a divisional championship is darn near inevitable.

And on September 7, 1984 the Tigers held a record of 89-51 and held a magic number of 15 as they headed to second-place Toronto for a three-game road series. With 22 games remaining, Detroit held a firm grasp on the American League East Division race. If Toronto had any chance of still challenging the Tigers for the AL East Division title, the Blue Jays were going to have to sweep Detroit in all three games at Toronto's home ballpark.

The first game of the weekend series featured 37,420 Toronto fans cheering for the home squad. Early on, it was working. Toronto scored two runs in the bottom of the third and two more runs in the bottom of the fourth to take a 4-0 lead. The Tigers were struggling mightily against future Detroit Tiger Doyle Alexander. But the Tigers' fortunes changed in the top of the eighth inning. During that inning, Dave Bergman doubled and an out later, Lou Whitaker walked. An out later, it looked like the inning may end without a Tiger run, but Kirk Gibson responded

with a three-run home run, cutting Toronto's lead to just 4-3. Lance Parrish drew a walk after the home run and Jimmy Key relieved for Alexander. Pinch hitter Barbaro Garbey singled and Larry Herndon walked to load the bases. Chet Lemon then drew a bases loaded walk, tying the contest at 4-all.

By this time, Willie Hernandez was pitching for the Tigers, and he was masterful, allowing just one hit over three innings. Finally, in the top of the 10th, Bergman came up with his second huge home run against the Blue Jays during the 1984 season. Bergman hit a three-run home run, setting up the Tigers' 7-4 10-inning victory. The Tigers' lead was now 9 1/2 games with two contests left in the series.

"I wouldn't say it to the writers after the game, but this one won it for us," Detroit Tigers' manager Sparky Anderson said in his book about the 1984 season, 'Bless You Boys.' "This one put the nail in the coffin. It was the biggest game of the year for us. We did what we had to do — we stopped them in their home park. In my 15 years in the big leagues, this game ranks in my top 10."

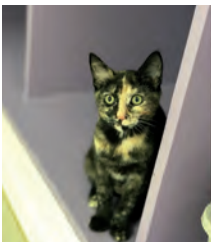
The Blue Jays were pretty disheartened by the loss and ended up losing the next two games. The Saturday game ended up being a 10-4 Tigers' win with Johnny Grubb hitting two solo home runs and Darrell Evans hitting another. Alan Trammell had three hits and drove in three runs.

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