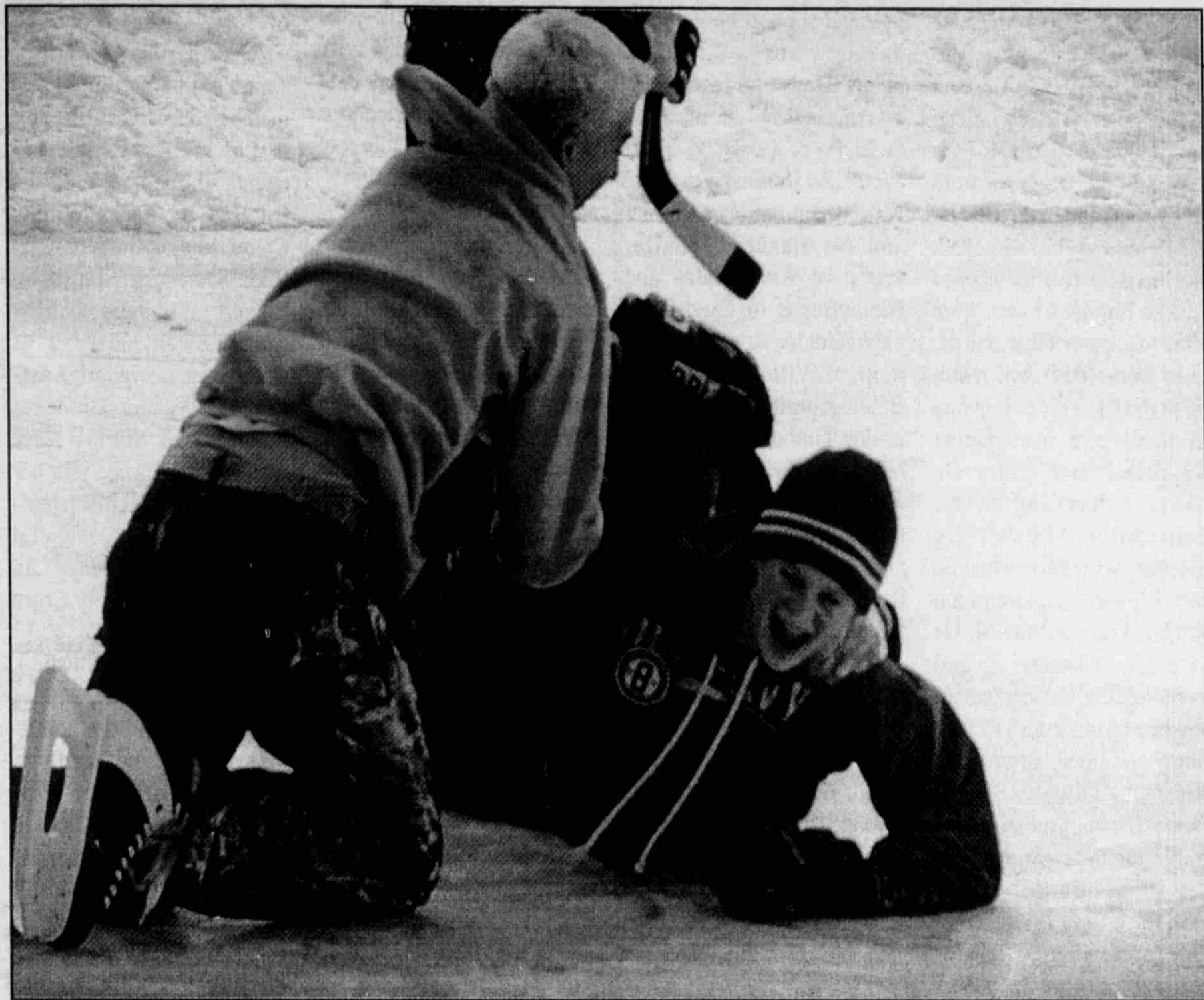


# The Lowell Ledger

VOLUME 30 ISSUE 11

Serving Lowell Area Readers Since 1893

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2004



## Icy Fun!

John Drier (top) and Cody Riemersma (hidden) tackle Torsten Boss Monday. The three were playing hockey on the ice at Richards Park.

Kent County Youth Fair president Ron Wenger and Todd Phillips of the Lowell Department of Public Works take care of the ice for Lowell Parks and Recreation.

"It's probably the best I've ever seen it right now," Wenger said about the ice Tuesday morning.

The ice rink has been at Richards Park for five years since it moved from Creekside Park.

## Superintendent Miller sets future educational goals

By Dan Schneider

At the Jan. 12 board of education meeting, superintendent Shari Miller presented her goals for the school district for the next few years.

These "strategic change priorities" include improving performance on state assessments, developing the district's own assessment program, and improving communication and accountability with parents and the school board.

In the next three to five years, the goal is for 95 percent of students to be performing at grade level in math and literacy. This anticipates higher requirements from the state and federal government. Miller feels this is a reasonable goal based on Lowell's past performance in the Michigan Education Assessment Program.

"We have on occasion hit 90 (percent) and we would like to once again hit 90 and go beyond," Miller said.

The last time Lowell MEAP scores showed more than 90 percent of students performing at grade level for fourth-grade math was in the 2000-2001 school year. The district score that year was 90.2. The fourth-grade score for 2002-2003 was 75.

The best performance on a MEAP eighth-grade math test was 88.4 in 1999-2000. The most recent eighth-grade score was 71.

The 2000-2001 MEAP math test increased in difficulty at both fourth- and eighth-grade levels. This is reflected in statewide scores also. Scores for Lowell Area Schools are perennially above state scores.

Educational goals, cont'd., pg. 15

## New ideas from the Secretary of State

By Dan Schneider

In a speech given at the annual joint meeting of the Lowell Rotary Club and the Lowell Women's Club last Wednesday, Secretary of State Terry Lynn Land talked about some new ideas her office is putting into effect.

As Secretary of State, Lynn is the chief motor vehicle administrator for the state of Michigan. Few people, she said, realize that this includes oversight and licensing of auto dealerships and repair shops. This provides consumer protection in the auto-repair market.

"If you feel like you don't get good service or they're not doing what they're supposed to do, let us know," Land said.

She also plugged the Secretary of State's web site, [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos). It is now possible to renew license-plate tabs on-line.

This is part of what Land said is an attempt to make the office more convenient. To that end, Land said, the office is also consolidating its branches. The Secretary of State currently has 173 branches in the state of Michigan. Decreasing the number of branches while maintain-



Judy Harrison, left, and Pete Odland, both of the Rotary Club, with Secretary of State Terry Lynn Land.

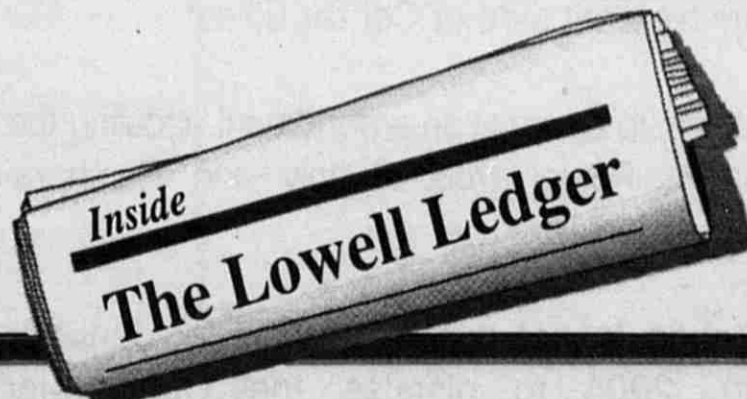
ing the same number of staff will allow remaining branches to extend their hours of operation.

The Secretary of State will also begin issuing permanent license plates to cut down on branch traffic from fleet-plate renewals. This will start with Consumers Energy and the UPS, two of the largest fleets in Michigan.

She encouraged the public to try out the ATM-style license-tab-renewal terminal at the main Grand Rapids branch at Monroe Center and Fulton Street. If the terminals prove successful, they will be eventually placed in convenient locations outside Secretary of State office branches.

As Secretary of State, Land is also Michigan's chief

elections officer. Using \$100 million from the federal Help America Vote Act, the state will be putting in electronic voting systems that will eliminate bad ballots. It is also working toward the development of devices to assist people who have needed help voting in the past - the blind, for example.



Murray Lake Open House pics...Page 8

Escanaba in da Moonlight...Page 9

Arson...Page 20









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**Sharing The Vision**  
**SHARI MILLER**  
Lowell Schools Superintendent

In the next few weeks, you'll see or hear about a letter grade given to each of our schools and to schools throughout Michigan. Schools may get an A, B, C or D/Alert under this new grading system known as the Education YES! Report Card, the state's latest way to gauge how schools are doing. While it's not the only way to measure a school's success, it is the newest way.

Education YES! is required by state law and was created, in part, to be Michigan's answer to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that requires each state to have an approved accountability system. Developed by Michigan experts, the Education YES! system was recently approved by the federal government, so that eligible Michigan schools can receive federal funding for children in need of extra help and schools in need of improvement can be identified.

The Education YES! grades will be given once every school year. The single letter grade will be computed using students' scores on Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests, a comparison of those MEAP scores over time, and some other factors like parent involvement in the schools. The Report Card's single letter grade is a shorthand way to show how our schools are doing. Just as a child's report card is an accounting of how he or she did on tests and assignments throughout the year, Education YES! is an

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accounting of how students in specific grades did on selected tests at a given time during a school year.

But a school, like a student, is much more than a letter grade. A student's report card is just one way we assess his or her progress. Likewise, the Education YES! Report Card is just one way we assess each school's progress.

The Report Card doesn't tell about the hundreds of success stories that happen everyday within the school walls. It misses the thousands of exciting learning moments each day when the "light goes on" for a student and he finally understands about fractions or when she "sees" how the human heart works or when he plays a perfect trumpet solo or when she gives a convincing performance in the school play. It can't adequately reflect the quality of interaction between teachers and students. It doesn't measure the valuable lessons learned each day that don't fall under the statewide, pre-determined test items. In other words, just like it's impossible to know a child's whole nature by a single grade, it's impossible to judge a school's whole essence by a single grade. That's why we will continue to report our progress in many different ways.

## Knights of Columbus free throw champs

Pictured are this year's winners of the Lowell Knights of Columbus Freethrow Championship, in which over 70 kids participated. Winners will move on to the district championship Feb. 7.

Front row, left to right, are Alexis Foster, Cody Bieri, Stephanie Stevens, Jordan Drake, Samantha Braman and Zach Noskey; back row are Josh Drake, Krista Foster, Jordan Boon, Breanna Bueche, Eric Saenz and Chelsea Harrison.



We believe you're entitled to know the entire story about how our schools are doing. That's why we report on them regularly through our annual reports, school newsletters, televised Board meetings, and school website. And, that's what we will continue to do, even after the Education YES! Report Cards are issued. We believe that the grades received this year by our schools will help us identify ways in which we can improve.

We're always working to improve achievement for our students. And, we can do even better with your help. Please join us in our continuing efforts to be the best schools we can be. If you are interested in being more involved in your child's school or at the district-level, please contact your building principal or me. Your thoughts and ideas are important to us.

Your comments about this concern or any issue would be greatly appreciated. Send to Shari Miller, Lowell Area Schools, 300 High St., Lowell, MI 49331 or smiller@remc8.k12.mi.us. (check out our web page at www.lowell.k12.mi.us)

## Exercise for a healthier you

The U.S. Surgeon General reports that at least three out of five Americans do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity necessary for good health. In 2002, a lack of physical activity cost Michigan residents nearly \$8.9 billion in health care payments stemming from diseases associated with obesity and heart disease. For both quality of life and health care costs, every bit of physical activity counts.

"Take small steps and set attainable goals to start and sustain a healthier lifestyle in the New Year," says Dr. Tom Simmer, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan corporate medical director. "As difficult as it is to start good exercise and eating habits, it's even harder to continue after the

newness wears off. The good news is that small challenges help to get and keep you going."

It is recommended that one start with a 10-15 minute walk three times a week, with a goal of increasing to 30-45 minutes, five days a week.

Some additional tips for a successful year of activity:

- Look for group activities to jump-start your interest, such as local fitness walks.
- When you're up to 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity (i.e., walking, jogging, swimming) several times a week, you can add a few minutes of weight and resistance training to your workout for optimal health benefits.
- Be sure to warm up before activity and stretch your muscles after.

• Everyone can benefit from a variety of physical activities, ranging from sports to everyday household chores. Be sure to consult with your doctor about the types of programs that will most benefit you.

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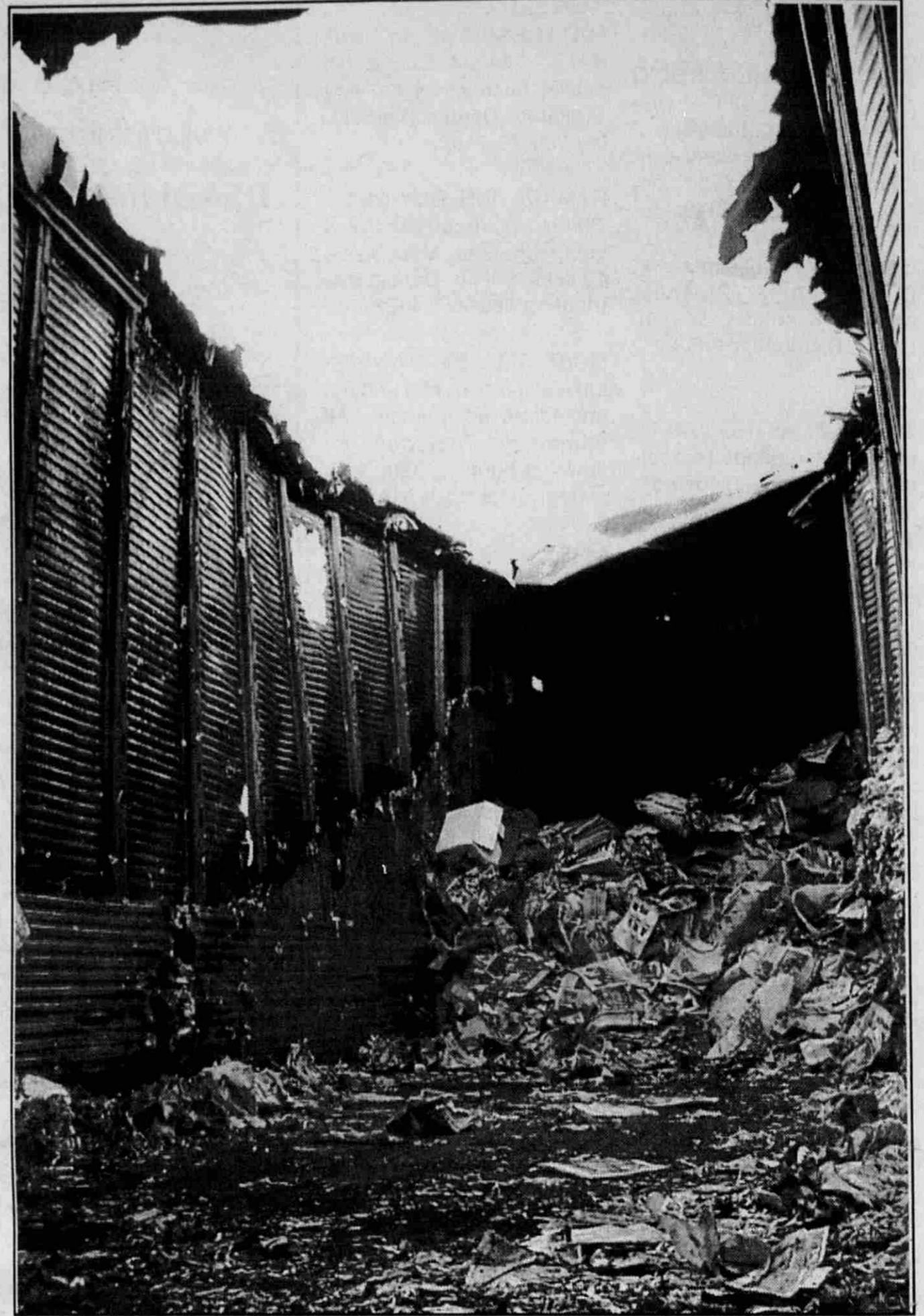


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## Paper-drive trailer destroyed by arson



The Lowell High School softball team's paper-drive trailer is pictured after a fire destroyed it last Thursday evening. The cause is still under investigation.

By Dan Schneider

A fire last Thursday evening destroyed the Lowell High School softball team's paper-drive trailer in the parking lot of Curtis Cleaners on West Main Street. The fire began after 7 p.m. It took firefighters two hours to extinguish it. The cause of the fire is under investigation. "It is unknown right at this point if an accelerant was used," Lowell police chief Jim Valentine said.

The trailer has been a fixture in the Lowell community for the past several

years. The paper drive raised money for the softball program. Also, over the last two years the team has given \$400 to the food pantry at Flat River Outreach Ministries, Inc.

"The community supported it," softball coach, Bob Rodenhouse said. "There wasn't a time I came out here to check on it when there wasn't somebody dropping something off."

Rodenhouse said the trailer was nearly full when the fire occurred.

He also said Nu-Wool

Insulation Company, Inc., the company that provides the trailer and uses the paper to make insulation, has had several of its paper-drive trailers in the Grand Rapids area burned.

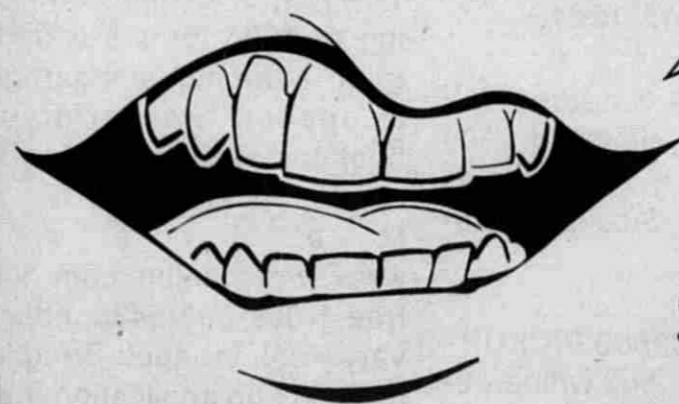
The team will set up a new trailer, Rodenhouse said, but he is not sure where.

Lowell police were following leads as of yesterday. Anyone with information is asked to call the Silent Observer at 774-2345. A \$250 reward is being offered.

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