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Wednesday, May 17, 2006

Flanagan farm second to be preserved in Kent County

By Dan Schneider



Peter Wege of the Wege Foundation, farm owners Kathleen and Lloyd Flanagan, Kent County Agricultural Preservation board chair Dennis Heffron, county commissioner Jack Horton and Natural Resources Conservation Service representative Jack Bricker stand with a sign that will denote the Flanagan farm as being permanently preserved under the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights program. A dedication ceremony was held at the farm, Monday.

There wasn't a lot of rain Monday morning, but some did fall on about 30 people who gathered near a farm field in southern Grattan Township.

They were there, most under umbrellas and a few sitting on hay-bales arranged into a makeshift amphitheater, for the dedication of the Flanagan farm as the second farm to be preserved through the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR). The 145-acre farm has been in the Flanagan family since 1947, when Lloyd Flanagan's parents moved there in the spring.

"The farms are just as important to our citizens of this country as the Fortune 500 companies."

- Peter Wege

Flanagan took over farming the land in 1968 and has since passed that role on to his son, David Flanagan.

David Flanagan, 39, has worked the farm since 1985.

"I've never worked another job other than here and another job working for another farm," he said.

He's grateful for the measure of security that will come with the PDR agreement: at least the land won't be developed.

"As a small farm, it's really going to help that," David Flanagan said.

Tough economic times and the pressure to sell to developers is brought to bear most acutely on the small-scale farmers, who don't reap the benefit of economies of scale.

Flanagan farm, cont'd., pg. 11

Cultivating understanding through the Internet

High school students collaborate with students from Ramallah for online magazine

By Dan Schneider

Students in Nate Fowler's ninth grade social studies class at Lowell High School are learning about life in the Middle East, directly from students who live there.

For the past three weeks or so, the class has been editing articles for an online magazine called "Life Behind the Wall." The articles are written by Palestinian students living in Ramallah in the West Bank. Palestinians talk about

their experiences under Israeli occupation: waiting at checkpoints, having houses invaded by Israeli soldiers, seeing parents shot. There are articles on political topics, such as the recent Hamas party victory in Palestine, and lighter subjects, too, such as music, food and fashion.

"It's been a great project," Fowler said. "One, these kids have been able to help those students with their English, but also it gives them an idea of what life is like in the Middle East, just like they are."

Students also utilize more informal weblog sites to exchange ideas.

The Palestinian students attend the Friends Boys School in Ramallah. It's called a boys school, but it is a co-educational facility.

Ramallah is located

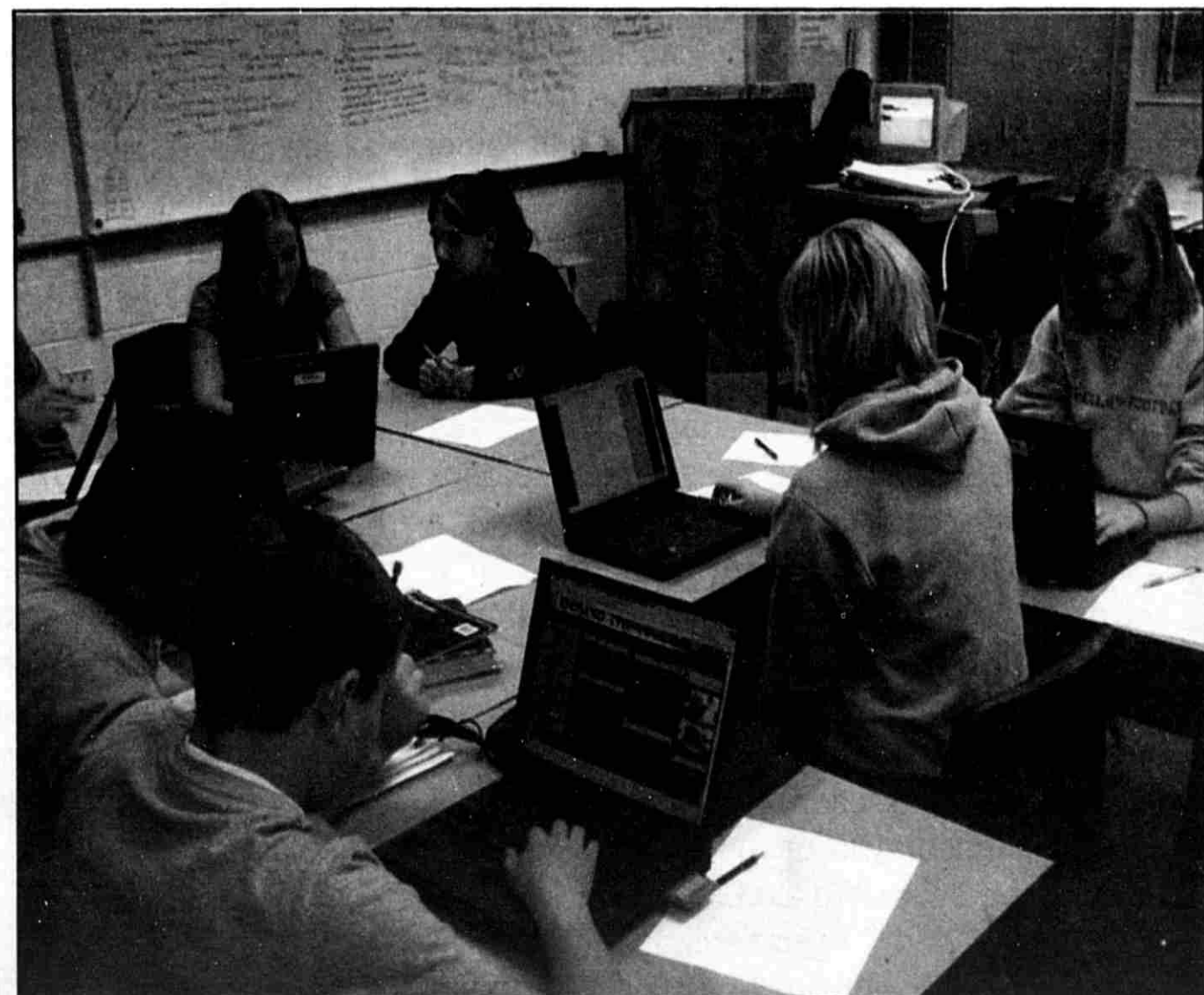
about 10 miles north of Jerusalem, separated from the northern end of that city by a 25-foot high, concrete wall. It is from this "Separation Wall," which many call the "Apartheid

Wall," that the online magazine takes its name. The wall is taller than the Berlin Wall was.

In addition to Fowler's class, students at Rockford, Sparta, East Grand Rapids,

Grand Rapids Catholic Central and several other high schools have contributed editing and

Online magazine, cont'd., pg. 11



Lowell High School freshmen have been using computers to interact online with Palestinian students from Ramallah in the West Bank.

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Flanagan farm, continued ... From Page 1

"The input costs are higher and the prices are lower," David Flanagan said.

By paying farmers for an easement on their property prohibiting development, the PDR program seeks to give them an economic alternative to selling to developers. According to Kent County Agricultural Preservation board chairman Dennis Heffron, the only thing holding the program back in this county is funding. Farmers are lining up to enroll their property.

"This area here, fortunately, has had a lot of interest," Heffron said, referring to southeastern Kent County, which has a high percentage of prime agricultural land. "If there was funding for this, it would just blow up."

The board has received over 110 applications from farmers in the county. They represent more than 5,000 acres of farmland.

Federal funding is available for farmland preservation, but requires local matching funds. These have come from individual

donors, townships, foundations and farmers contributing a portion of the value of their properties' development rights. Through these means, progress is picking up speed.

"We have three more farms that we have funding for that we are working on closing on," Heffron said. "We've got seven more farms that we've been able to get the local funding for and are applying for the federal funding."

Of the three farms in the final stages, two are in Grattan Township. The third

is in Lowell Township. The 106-acre Howard farm on Parnell Avenue in Vergennes Township became the first farm enrolled in the program last year.

Progress has been slower in other parts of the county, where farmland preservationists have not had as much luck finding local funding. During the 2003-2004 PDR application cycle, for instance, \$200,000 in two-to-one matching funds from the Frey Foundation was lost because local funding couldn't be secured

in Alpine, Sparta and Tyrone townships.

What wasn't lost on the people who spoke at Monday's dedication ceremony was the importance of preserving farmland. State senator Bill Hardiman spoke at the event, citing a 12 percent loss in farmland in Kent County over the five years from 1997-2002.

"The farms are just as important to our citizens of this country as the Fortune 500 companies," Peter Wege said.

His Wege Foundation has been a major supporter of

PDR efforts in Kent County, and was instrumental in the purchase of the rights to the Flanagan farm. Hardiman and Natural Resources Conservation Service state conservationist Jack Bricker both mentioned the role farmland may soon play in the energy market. Ethanol and biodiesel are derived from corn and soybeans, respectively.

The need for farmland preservation was even more pressing to David Flanagan.

"If you don't, I'll be without a job, some day," he said.

Online magazine, continued ... From Page 1

otherwise interacted with the students in Ramallah. The connection happened through Doug Hart, a former Michigan state representative for the 73rd District, who teaches at Friends Boys School.

This interchange between American and Palestinian youth has allowed each group to learn about the other's culture, the similarities and differences.

"Actually, I thought it has been more similarities actually, they just have a different outlook," Thomas Jeffrey said.

One area the similarities are visible in is appreciation for pop culture.

"They like American music. It's just a really weird variety," Ellie Timpson said.

For instance, one Ramallah student mentioned rap artist 50 Cent in the same sentence as Celine Dion when listing his favorite musicians.

Reading the Palestinians' impressions of Americans was an eye-opening experience for the Lowell students.

"Very rarely, really, do we ever see people saying good things about the United States," Megan Lyonnais said.

To the dismay of some Lowell students, many

Palestinians don't make a distinction between the American people and the actions of our government.

"I'm kind of embarrassed that people see our government and people see us like that," Timpson said.

Lowell students try to inform the Palestinians about the non-government aspects of American culture.

"We've posted a lot of things and we're kind of proving them wrong," Timpson said.

On a similar note, the Palestinian students resent the link westerners

make between Islam and terrorism.

"A lot of them are saying how they are not like that, that there are only a few radical Muslims, radical people, and that those people don't represent their religion," Kirsten Nelson said.

So far, Lowell students have spent one full class period editing the online magazine and two partial class periods posting on the weblogs.

"It's been exciting to me, professionally, to be able to integrate the technology," Fowler said.

The web address for the online magazine is www.lifebehindthewall.com.

The universal brotherhood of man is our most precious possession.

- Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)

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-Margaret Mead

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Gee Drive (from Creekside Park to approximately 1/2 mile west) will be closed to through traffic from May 8 until June 23 for street improvements. Traffic will be limited to local access only. Through traffic will be detoured to Foreman Road and Alden Nash. Creekside Park will be accessible from Foreman.

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The proposed new Master Plan, as revised, is intended to serve as a guide for future development and land use within Bowne Township. The proposed new Master Plan contains information about current and past conditions in the community, goals for the future of the Township, and a future land use map illustrating development patterns and intended land uses throughout the Township. The proposed Master Plan will replace in its entirety the current Land Use Plan adopted in 2000.

Adoption of the proposed new Master Plan does not change any ordinance or regulation regarding the use of land. Adoption of the proposed new Master Plan also does not mean that any property will be immediately rezoned to match the Plan.

Interested parties may be heard at the June 8 public hearing. Written comments will be received until the close of the public hearing and may be addressed to the Township Clerk at P. O. Box 35, Alto, Michigan 49302. The proposed Master Plan may be copied or examined at the historic Township Hall, 8240 Alden Nash, S.E., Alto, Michigan, on Wednesdays and Thursdays, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and on Fridays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

May 17, 2006
Sandra L. Kowalczyk, Clerk
Bowne Township

Featured Artist

Nancy Porter

By Dan Schneider

Huntington Galleria in Lowell now has an exhibit of paintings by watercolor artists from Lowell's Studio 208.

The second floor studio, located above Chimera Design on East Main St., is where David

Davis teaches watercolor painting on Tuesday nights. The artwork by the dozen or so students reflects their varying perspectives: flowers, butterflies, abstract compositions. Students often paint the same still life arrangement in different ways. "And different colors

even," said Nancy Porter, a student at Studio 208 since the winter, 2005 session.

She took painting classes in oil and acrylic at the University of Michigan-Dearborn in the late 1970s. More recently, she studied watercolor while traveling in Italy.

"I never expected to take watercolor," Porter said.

But she is glad to be in the watercolor classes, where she said she learns a lot from the other students.

"It's a wonderful fellowship of artists," Porter

said. "We have a good time and encourage each other a lot."

The art will be on display at Huntington Galleria, located in the Huntington Bank at 414 E. Main, through June 6.



Nancy Porter with her painting "Alpha and Omega: The Beginning and the End," one of a group of artworks on display at Huntington Galleria.

New, larger location for Blue Ribbon Feeds

By Dan Schneider

Even with three times as much space as their previous location, Blue Ribbon Feeds' new retail store is fairly crowded with merchandise.

It is full of bird seed, grass seed, flower seed, animal feed, bird feeders, dog toys. There are shelves full of feed, and racks full of yard and garden supplies.

Over the last two weeks, Blue Ribbon Feeds has moved all of this merchandise, plus some new additions, from their former location, attached to the feed mill, to the building next door which was recently vacated by Michael's Farm Market. Located at the corner of Main and Hudson streets, the new place is larger and already pretty full. But there is a lot more room to move around.

"It's easily accessible now," said Barbara Carpenter, who owns Blue Ribbon Feeds with her husband Scott.

The company has been in business for 23

years. The new space will allow them to expand their offerings, including selling annual flowers, vegetables and hanging baskets.

"We're expanding with the garden products, seeds," Carpenter said.

They also have more flexibility to stock new products.

"We're open to any suggestions about what people want," Carpenter said.

The new showroom, she said, has received good reviews from customers.

"It's been a very positive response from customers, old and new," Carpenter said. "They're just thrilled to pieces that we have more room to put things out."

They will have an open house--"a re-grand opening," Carpenter said--in late June, with door prizes and specials. The store's regular hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday; 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday; and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.



The Carpenter family, from left to right, Scott, Alex, Amy, Barbara and Craig, have moved their Blue Ribbon Feeds' retail showroom to a larger building on the corner of Main and Hudson streets, the building formerly occupied by Michael's Farm Market.

Apple blossom time



Michigan's state flower is back in bloom. The apple blossom is once more filling Michigan's apple orchards.

Known for its delicate petals and sweet aroma, it usually appears in late April through mid-May depending on spring temperatures. Blossom color

can vary according to the type of apple tree produces but is most widely recognized as white with a pink tint. It is a member of the rose family, but for the apple grower, the blossom also indicates a successful autumn apple harvest.

Each spring Michigan apple orchards are flooded with the color and delectable scent of these beautiful flowers painting the roadsides, which makes this an ideal spring color tour. The tours are similar to the autumn color tours and Michigan drivers can appreciate the beauty of the blossom, particularly in the western part of the state. Apple orchards in Western Michigan stretch from Traverse City to the southern corner of the state.

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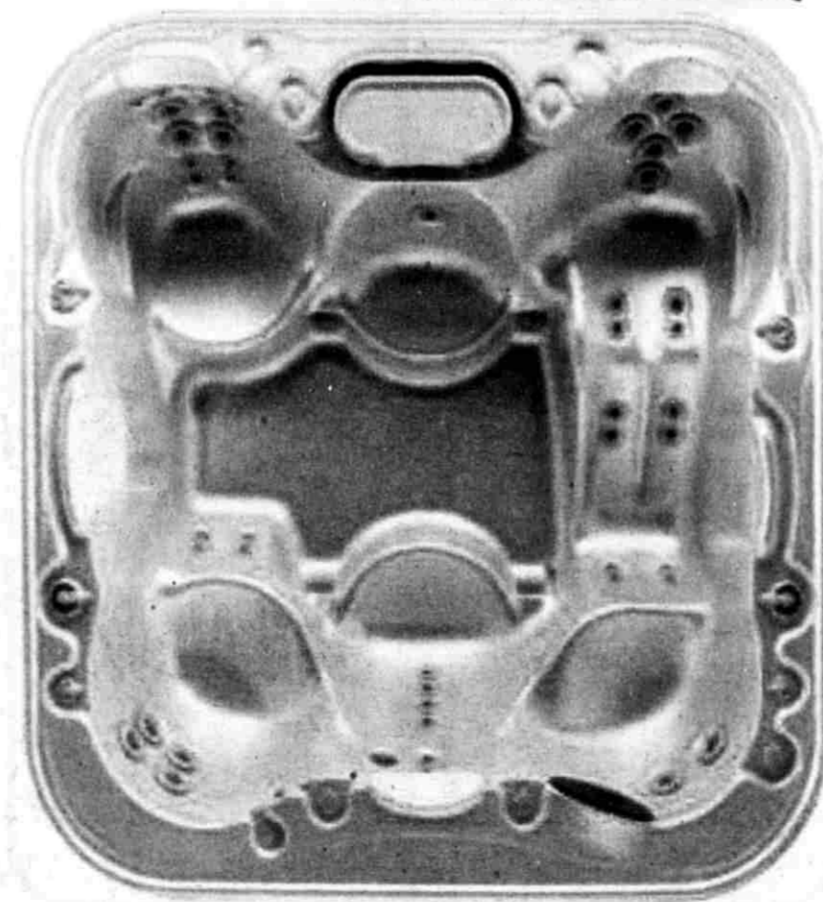


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Financial Focus

With Christopher C. Godbold
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TIME FOR A PORTFOLIO "SPRING CLEANING?"

Now that we're well into May, you might look around your house and yard and decide it's time for a little spring

cleaning, if you're the sort of person who does that kind of thing. But even if you aren't, you can probably benefit from "sprucing up" another part of your life - your investment portfolio. Why? Because things change in your life. And while your investment and insurance products and strategies may have been appropriate for you at one time, that may no longer be the case.

So, once you decide to clean up your portfolio, what should you look for? Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Avoid "redundant" holdings. Do you have too many of the same type of stocks "cluttering" your portfolio? Too many people think that, when it comes

to investing, they can't get "too much of a good thing." Consequently, if they have two growth stocks from the same industry, they add a third. Or, on the other side of the investment spectrum, if they like the steady income from their fixed income they might buy another. Depending on your individual needs, you may find that growth stocks and fixed income can play a role in your diversified portfolio, but "overloading" on either of these securities - or any other, for that matter - can actually hinder your progress toward your financial goals. For example, if you add too many of the same type of growth stocks, you may expose yourself to a market downturn that is particularly hard on one specific sector. Or, if you divert some of your investment dollars toward additional fixed income, you may deprive yourself of needed growth opportunities.

- Examine "automatic" investments. Are you still automatically moving money from your checking account into an investment that you first purchased years ago, under different circumstances? Could this money possibly be better directed elsewhere? Check your automatic purchases carefully to see if they still meet your needs.

- Review your insurance coverage. When you first start out in your career, and you have a young family, you definitely need a certain amount of life insurance to replace your income, pay for your mortgage, educate your children, etc. But, as your children grow and leave home, and you finish paying for your home, your needs for life insurance will change. Go over your policies with your investment professional to see if your coverage is still appropriate. You may find that a different type of policy can be beneficial in helping you meet other types of needs, such as estate planning.

- Check your beneficiaries. Over the years, your family situation may change. To cite just one possibility, you may remarry and take on the responsibilities of a blended family. If this happens, you'll need to closely check the beneficiary designations on your investments, retirement plans and insurance policies. If you don't update these designations, your wishes may not be carried out when it's time for your estate to be settled.

By following these suggestions, you can give your portfolio a spring cleaning that should help serve you well in all seasons.

MSU students place in agri-marketing competition

For the second year in a row, Michigan State University (MSU) students finished in the final four of the National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) Student Marketing Competition.

Pieter Serne, of Lowell, an agribusiness management sophomore, was one of six MSU team members attending the conference.

The MSU club traveled to the National Agri-Marketing Association's annual conference and trade show in Kansas City, Kan., April 19-21, finishing third out of 26 other student NAMA chapters.

This year's club marketed Premium Pulp, a dry pelleted beet pulp feed additive, produced by the Michigan Sugar Company, that helps reduce phosphorus content in cow manure.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS unless presented to Robert Jones, Trustee, 1850 Burlingame, S.W., Wyoming, MI 49509, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, VIVIAN QUINN, who lived at 4850 Buchanan, S.W., Wyoming, Michigan, died April 2, 2006.

Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the deceased or the trust will be forever barred

May 6, 2006
John D. Mitus, Attorney (P-31244)
410 Bridge St. N.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
616-774-4001

Robert Jones
Successor Trustee
1850 Burlingame, S.W.
Wyoming, MI 49509

April Staff Member of the Month

Lori Cyrocki was named Staff Member of the Month of April by staff members at Murray Lake Elementary. Cyrocki, a second grade teacher, has a positive and caring attitude that she shows to her Murray Lake students.

"I am always impressed with Mrs. Cyrocki's modeling of our character traits," said Patti Harrel, media center para-educator.

Missy Harrison, physical education teacher, added, "She is so kind and compassionate to her students."

Cyrocki, originally from Arizona, has lived in Lowell for the past 18 years. She taught sixth grade for five years at LMS, and is in her second year of teaching second grade. She and her husband Dave have two

daughters, Emily and Sarah. "I enjoy the positive and family-like atmosphere at Murray Lake. I feel very supported by parents, the administration, and my fellow teachers. I can look outward at the wonderful countryside around me and I can look inward at the wonderful faces of my students," said Cyrocki.

The moment of victory is much too short to live for that and nothing else.

- Martina Navratilova (1956 -)



Second grade teacher Lori Cyrocki with her second grade students.

Moore participates in benefit tournament

The White Lake Karate Club hosted the fourth annual "Take A Kick At Cancer" open karate tournament in Whitehall on May 6. The event, held in honor of those who have lost their battle with cancer, is held to raise funds to benefit the American Cancer Society.

With a passion for the cause, local karate kid Mariah Moore did her part to take a kick at cancer again this year. "I really look forward to the 'Take a Kick at Cancer Tournament' because cancer took my grandpa from me when I was only two, it took my grandma from me just one year ago, and my friend Anna is fighting cancer right now. It makes me feel really good to be able to use the sport that I love and work so hard at it to help fight cancer and maybe help save lives," said Moore.

This year's "Take a Kick at Cancer" tournament raised \$2,141 toward the fight against cancer.



Moore in the weapons competition with her signature Kris Swords.

Young champions



Above, Lowell's young champion baton team placed first in the Western Michigan competition on May 6. Pictured, front row, left to right: Cassie Franklin and Alina White; back row: Tess Richardson, Morgan Duram, coach Amanda Vezino and Hannah Duvernay.



At right, Lowell's young champion cheer team, level II, placed first in the Western Michigan competition on May 13. Pictured, front row, left to right: Alexis Corner and Autumn Chrisman; back row: Amber Cook, coach Amanda Vezino and Ryley Breimayer.

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Free Comic Book Day at Rookies

Nathan Haney, Nathan Shields, Jameson Crymes, Spiderman (John Vago), Batgirl (Aurora Weeks), Adam Bodus, Patrick Nummer and Kyle Krick attended "Free Comic Book Day" Saturday, May 6, at Rookies Sportscards on Main Street. For the annual promotion, comic book publishers such as Marvel, DC and Image release special free editions of some of their popular comic series to comic book stores around the country. The event has been growing in popularity according to Rookies' owner Jack Reedy. In its fifth year, "Free Comic Book Day" attracted more people to the shop than it has in the past.

"People kind of know to look for it now because they come in and ask me, 'When is that free comic book day?' That's pretty cool," Reedy said.



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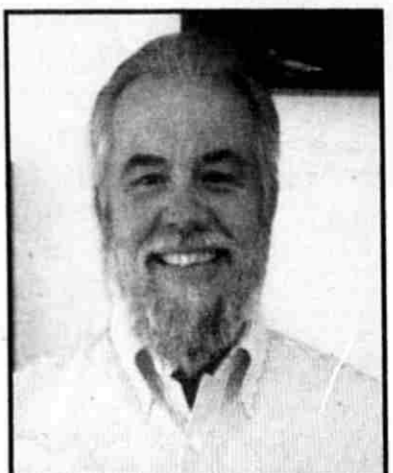
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