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More space in store for F.R.O.M. after rezoning

By Dan Schneider



Flat River Outreach Ministries volunteers sort clothing donations in the cramped confines of the charity's current location. Pictured from left to right are Dolores Dey, Jantina Wasciuk, Polly VanderStel, and, in background, Iris Clark and Bev Fron.

By the end of this fall, Flat River Outreach Ministries (F.R.O.M.) will have a new building and a lot more space.

The local charity organization plans to move into a large building formerly occupied by Cumberland Retirement Village. Cumberland has changed its name to Fountain View of Lowell and consolidated its operations into two smaller buildings on the east side of its property.

F.R.O.M. will be able to make good use of the space.

"We just need room, we're just out of room," F.R.O.M. board chairman Roger La Warre said. "We need to expand the pantry and we need to expand the thrift store."

At its present location, the thrift store's storage area is packed to its rafters, and there is barely room to walk between the shelves of F.R.O.M.'s food pantry. Both will have plenty of room to expand at the new location. F.R.O.M.'s current location, a former Baptist Church at 519 East Main Street, has about 5,000 square feet of space. The former Cumberland Manor building offers 55,000.

Additional room will allow F.R.O.M. to make improvement to benefit thrift store customers and the people it serves through the food pantry.

"They'll see a client-choice food pantry which means when people come in who need food, they will be able to select certain amounts of food from a variety of food available," La Warre said. "They are going to see a thrift store that is at least three times the size of the current one."

The expanded thrift store will include furniture, La Warre said. Additional storage space will allow the food pantry to bring in more bulk food items from the Second Harvest Gleaners.

Food pantry director Jody Haybarker said the operation of the expanded food pantry will be similar to walk-through food pantries in the Grand Rapids area.

"I'm just going to go to some places around and see how they do it and then put together our policies," she said.

Currently, food pantry volunteers put together boxes for families who come into the pantry. The new pantry will allow the people it serves to select their own food items.

"This way they'll be able to go through and pick what their kids like, meals they want to make," Haybarker said.

Volunteers will still be needed, she said, but they will likely have different roles.

More space for F.R.O.M., cont'd., pg. 10

Local business owners react to SBT repeal

By Dan Schneider

While local business owners aren't sad to see Michigan's Single Business Tax (SBT) go, many are more concerned about the other financial obstacles they face.

On Aug. 9, the Republican-led state legis-

lature voted to repeal the tax, saying it is burdensome to business and stifles Michigan's economic growth.

"The single business tax, it's a value-added tax," said state representative David Hildenbrand, R-Lowell. "As you employ more people, as you pay

them more, as you improve their health-care benefits, it goes up. It really is a disincentive for businesses to hire people and offer people better benefits."

The repeal means the SBT will end in 2007, two years earlier than called for in its original sunset clause. Because it is the result of

a citizen's initiative, Gov. Jennifer Granholm can't veto the repeal, as she did earlier this year.

Bill Lee, president and CEO of Superior Furniture Company in Lowell, said the SBT repeal helps.

"With all the global competition and all the

SBT, cont'd., pg. 9

Renovation celebration

By Dan Schneider

Fountain View of Lowell held an open house last Wednesday afternoon to mark the completion of a renovation project.

Formerly Cumberland Retirement Village, Fountain View of Lowell offers 20 beds of assisted living and 20 beds of memory care at 11535 E. Fulton Street in Lowell Township.

Leisure Living Management, which has owned the facility for the last 10 years, closed the larger building on the west side

of the property, known as Cumberland Manor. Leisure Living consolidated the operation in the property's two smaller buildings. They renovated and upgraded the building to bring it more in line with modern customer expectations.

"Today's consumer for assisted living and memory care, they're looking for a residential type of living," Leisure Living executive vice president Neil Kraay said.

The buildings formerly housed Cumberland

Retirement Village's independent living facility. Renovations and the transition to assisted living and memory care took nine months and displaced two independent living residents.

Many residents stayed in place during the renovations, which Kraay said impacted the common areas more than the residents' individual rooms.

"We owe a great deal to them for their patience while we were doing this," Kraay said.



Resident Glen Sironen, with the help of his dog Gizzy, cut a ribbon held by Fountain View of Lowell office manager Cindy Meyer, left, and administrator Carrie Pattee.

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SEE MORE'S CORNER



Being Able to Better See "the Big Parade That's A-Comin'"

Reading Time: Takes just 2 minutes and 9 seconds (to be informed!)
 Regardless of where you live, big city, small town or even a neighborhood, they all seem to develop a unique personality of their own. Over a period of time, those "group personalities" can change. But in any community, to be the very best it can be, calls for positive and creative leadership and supporters with a positive attitude to keep everything moving in the right direction.
 Those thoughts bring to mind some recent discussion about parades in Lowell and the question of parking on Main Street during those parades. Well, the

Lowell Merchants have entertained some discussion recently about how having street parking during parades affects those in town to watch our parades. Reasons they cited for this discussion are for the safety of everyone, especially for children and the difficulty created for people to see over and around these vehicles.

As part of this community, we as consumers have to consider what these parking spaces mean to a business. Yet, after a lot of discussion since the Riverwalk Parade, the merchants have made decisions to: (1.) not allow parking on Main Street during parades, and (2.) we'll schedule all future parades for mornings. This agreement is a good one, one for which we should all thank the merchants and the city for their cooperation, especially the help of Chief Jim Valentine in this process. See-More says "Bravo" for their decision!

It is cooperation like this at all levels that makes it possible for good things to continue to happen in Lowell. The process to bring about a change is sometimes taken for granted, but in a democracy there are often many hoops through which an idea must pass before it can become a reality. Our merchants remain on the cutting edge of new happenings in Lowell and have always been ready to support a new or special project. I've lived many places but have never found the open "spirit of community cooperation" more evident than it is right here in River City. Please

join of 'See-More and say, "Thank you!" to our wonderful merchants for all they do for "our town." (We probably don't say it often enough!)

ALERT! Don't be puttin' your lawn chairs away before the Parade ... you may want to have some place to sit during this one! The Harvest Celebration is now less than 60 days away and now the fine-tuning begins. We will soon be putting out the call for volunteers to help in many areas on Oct. 14. Consider being a part of this exciting community block-buster event. Also, be thinking about the upcoming Clown School ... and there's talk of a Lowell Alumni Band forming to be in the Parade! Nothing precision - just come out and play ... it'll be a one-rehearsal deal. Just play-full fun! More on this later.

I'll look for you tomorrow evening (Thursday) at the last Summer Concert Series at the Showboat. And, doncha just love having the "Great Voice of Western Michigan," Lowell's (and WOOD radio's) Gordon Gould as our announcer at the concerts? He's so cool!!! It'll be a great night of smooth music with the Lake Shore Jazz Ensemble! 7 p.m. at the Showboat!

So, keep your smilers working, support our troops and God Bless America!

See-More, the Hobo Clown!

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BUSINESSES & SERVICES



Arty award winner

Brent Alles was given this year's Lowell Area Arts Council Arty Award at the Art Attack IV party and art auction Saturday evening. Each year, the Arty is given to an individual deemed to have done the most for the arts in Lowell that year. Alles has built up a strong youth theater program through the Thebes Players. He directs youth productions and runs theater workshops for elementary age students, driving here all the way from Wyoming to do so.

Art Attack IV drew a lot of enthusiastic art supporters to the arts council's Hudson Street Gallery and large tent behind it. The steel drum band Pangea played Caribbean sounds to compliment the event's theme.

Photo submitted by Bruce Doll

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