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Paths of old and new cross at 2009 Lowell Expo

by Thad Kraus

Mike and Kim Harding were among 43 businesses in 1996 looking to grow in the community.

Harding Enterprises, a relatively new Lowell business at the time, chose to use the inaugural Lowell Community Expo as a vehicle to promote its asphalt, lawn and snowplowing business.

"We'll always remember that our first customer from that Expo was Dave Gerst Jr. (Roth-Gerst Funeral Home)," explained Kim Harding.

Fast forward 13 years to the 2009 Lowell Community Expo; one of this year's first-time exhibitors is Roth-Gerst Funeral Home.

"We've always enjoyed

participating and being an active part of the Lowell Community," said Gerst. "The problem we've encountered over the years is we are not able to commit to Saturday. Last year we had three funerals on the day of the Expo."

This year, Roth-Gerst Funeral Home was represented by two pre-need counselors - Sandi Quinn and Ellissa Howard.

They provided interested patrons with helpful information about preparing for what Gerst calls "the inevitable."

Roth-Gerst Funeral Home participated in the Women's Expo and received a lot of interest about pre-need counseling, according to Gerst.

"The Expo helps us



Harding Enterprises has been a fixture at the Expo for all 13 years.

to maintain and create an image in the community," Gerst explained.

Gerst now operates the funeral home for his father and has been a working member of the family business for 30 years.

Participating in its second year at the Expo was Ridgeline, a Lowell construction firm owned and operated by Matt Garrison.

"Lowell is a tight-knit community and it is important to be a visible part," Garrison said. "People have to know who you are and that you are out there."

Ridgeline made a couple

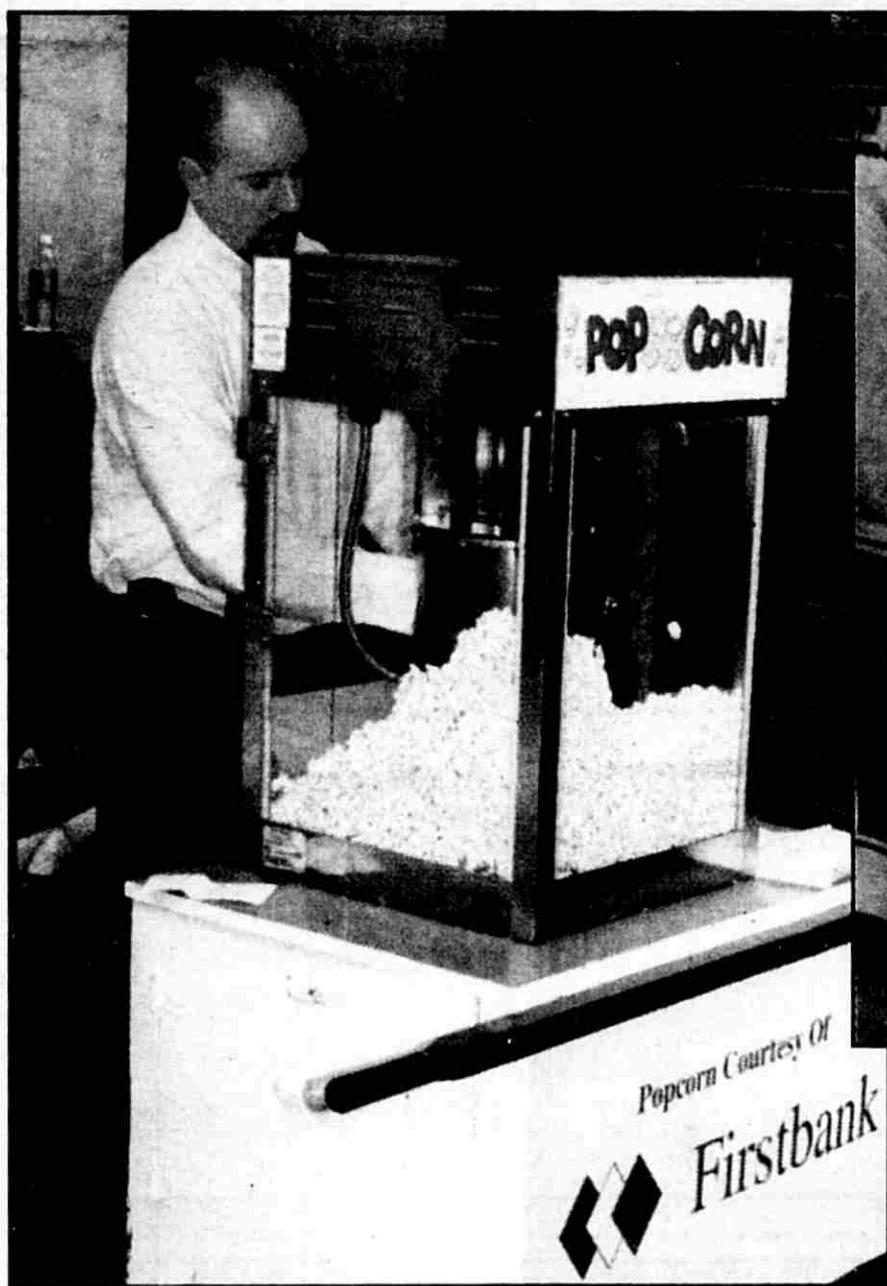
slight changes for the 2009 event which included adding a computer slide show.

"It gives people a better visibility of what our work looks like," Garrison explained.

The Lowell business owner adds that business so far this year has looked fairly good.

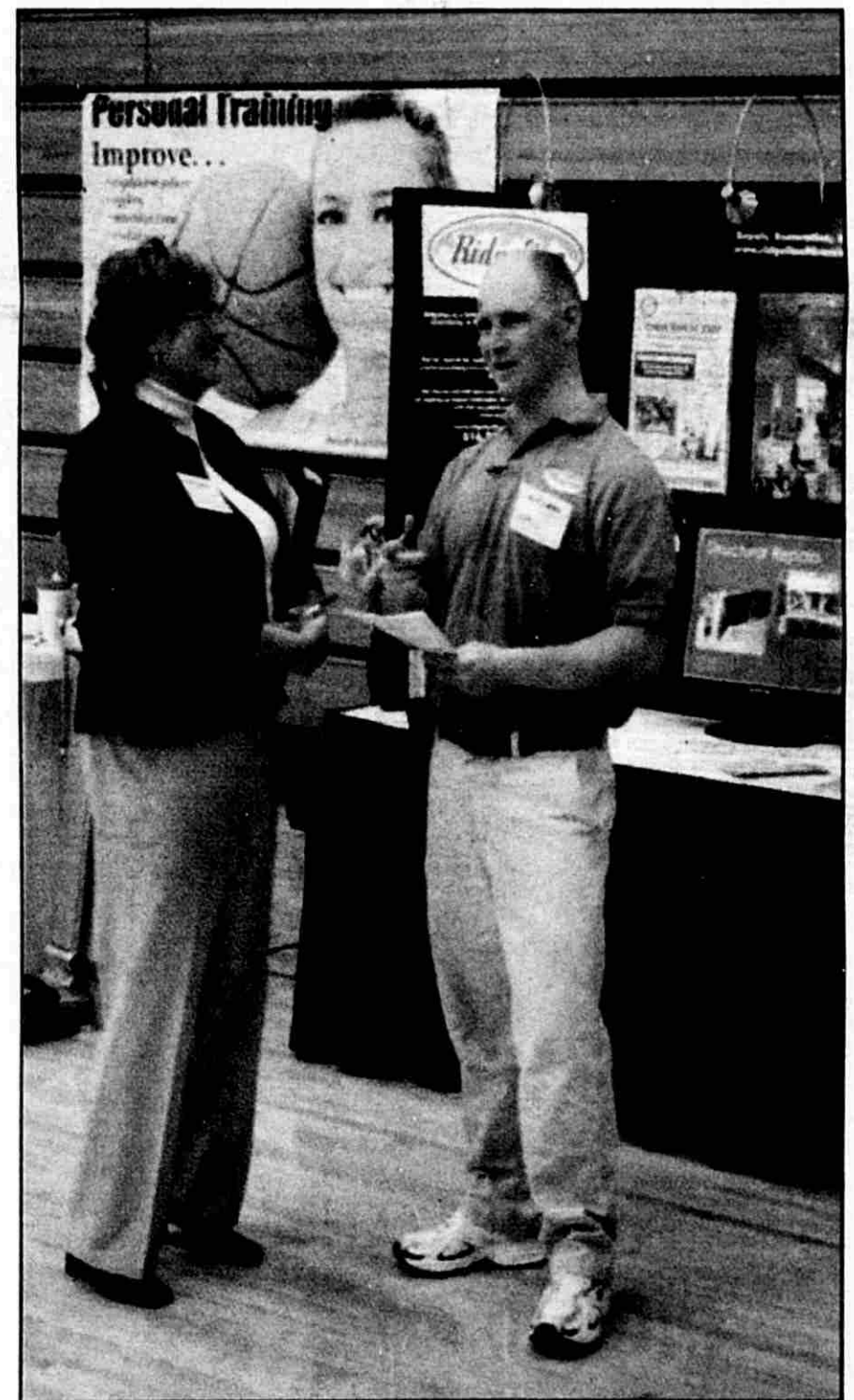
That's a change all Expo patrons could embrace during these tough economic times.

The 13th annual Lowell Community Expo hosted 150 booths while welcoming roughly 5,000 patrons.



Ellissa Howard and Sandi Quinn, pre-need counselors, from Gerst Funeral Homes, shared information with interested Expo patrons.

Kurt Lardie, left, of Firstbank, supplied the popcorn.



Matt Garrison, Ridgeline, discusses spring construction projects.

Computer repair service at reasonable prices

by Emma Palova

Owner of Computer Rehab, Michael Lezan has always enjoyed working on computers. Recently, Lezan opened up a computer repair business on Main Street in the former barber shop. Computer Rehab is a locally-run certified PC support center.

"I believe in a fair price for my services,"

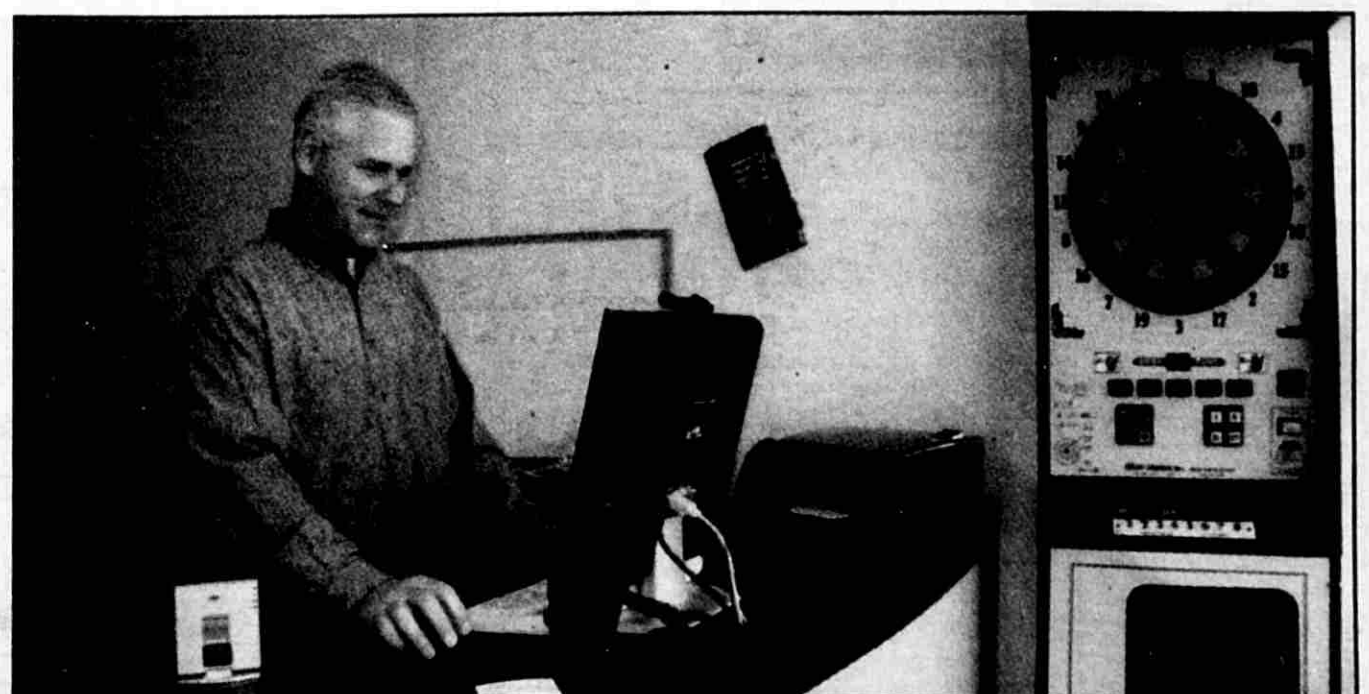
he said. "I just go with the economy to have the right price range."

Unlike most computer repair firms or technicians, Lezan charges for all repairs \$45. He also offers a VOIP (voice over Internet protocol) phone service, where all communications are over the Internet with the help of an adapter box. There are no long distance charges and free calls to

Europe, Asia and Puerto Rico.

Other services include hardware/software support, upgrades and repairs, troubleshooting, virus removal, custom Ethernet cables, spyware removal, data recovery and backups, and custom built computer systems.

Computer repair, cont'd., pg. 4



Michael Lezan is the owner of Computer Rehab.

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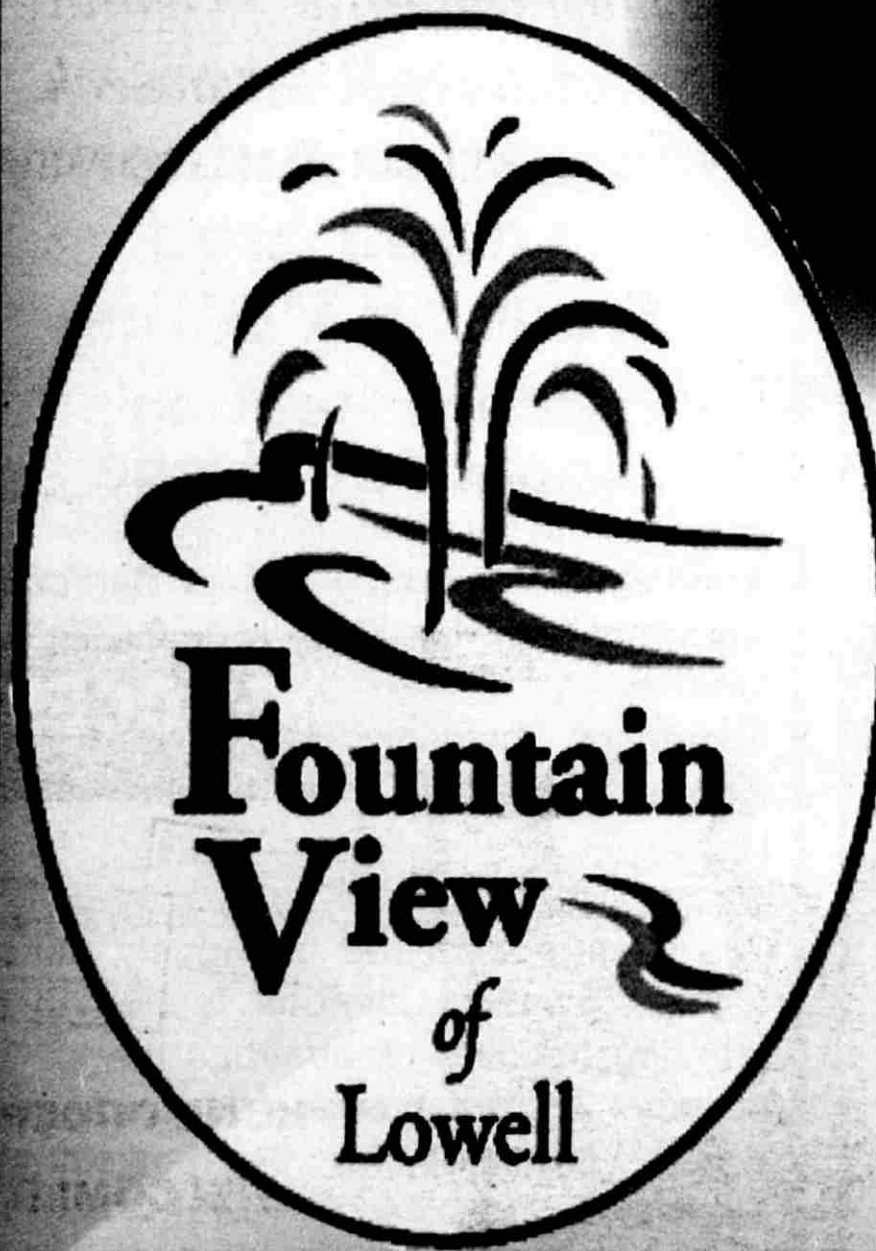
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- Kay Barnes

Resident A. McQueen and friend with daughter and son-in-law.



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Featured Artist

Marylu Dykstra

by Emma Palova

Artist Marylu Dykstra used the 'Camelot' story to depict her koi fish named Merlin, after the famous magician in the Arthurian legend. The orange and blue dotted Merlin is surrounded by concentric circles.

In her first solo art show 'Points of Light,' now on exhibit at the Riverwalk Gallery, Dykstra showcases her layered pointillism ink drawings from flowers, trees, to the Silver Angel Fish done with iridescent inks.

"I dipped and dotted in total concentration," she said. "It's a very Zen thing."

Dykstra draws on her positive and negative experiences in her artwork while creating visual representations of the visible and the invisible.

"I take the negative and make it beautiful from a different perspective," she said.

She considers art as

a form of therapy after having lost four babies, as well as her fish. Dykstra expresses some of her pain in her 'Reaching Tree' and 'Maman's Orchid.'

"It's very autobiographical," she said. "I always like to tell a story."

The intricate paintings document the fanciful play of molecules in the negative space created by solid structures or natural elements.

In her 'Thumbelina' drawing, she creates tiny landscapes in the petals of the flower. Painting brings balance into Dykstra's life.

"It's a side of me I never got to experience," she said. "It makes me feel like a three-dimensional person."

Dykstra, for the most part, is a self-taught artist except for one class at Aquinas College. Local artist Kathleen Mooney discovered Dykstra's talent



Artist Marylu Dykstra tells stories in her pictures using mainly layered pointillism.

last summer, and encouraged her to exhibit at the Fire and Water Art Gallery.

"I never considered myself an artist," she said. "It's a humbling feeling to

be a part of the collection at Fire and Water; to be in such a good company."

Water has always been an important part of Dykstra's life. She used to have a pond with koi fish named Merlin, Lancelot, Guinevere and Arthur. Unfortunately they didn't make it during a transfer.

"I love water and fish in the water," she said. "I want to do a jelly fish."

And she likes the task of making dots, while incorporating mistakes into drawings.

"I like to show how you can use them successfully," she said. "I like to draw make believe constellations."

That is what she did in

her 'Starry Sail,' created a background of imaginary constellations. Sometimes her paintings start as blobs of ink or a mistake turned into something brand new.

"I view every piece as an opportunity to practice and to learn something new," she said. "I try to find a better image within the image. You can always find a blessing in something that may not appear to be positive."

She hopes people will like her work and see the stories in each picture. In 'Dorothy's Poppies,' Dykstra wants people to be able to see the scent of a poppy. An artist's reception will be held on May 16.



Dykstra's "Detail of Koi Merlin."

The most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Local student named essay contest winner

Mattie Newman, an eighth grade student at Lowell Middle School, has been named a local winner in the 40th annual America & Me Essay Contest, sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance.

Newman will receive an award certificate for the achievement and her name will be engraved on a plaque for permanent display in the school.

Lowell Middle School's participation in the America & Me Essay Contest was sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance agent Mark Johnson, of Grand Rapids.

Newman's first place essay now advances to the state level competition, from which the top ten essays in Michigan will be selected. The top ten statewide winners, who will be announced in April, will each receive a plaque, a \$500 U.S. savings bond and a \$500 cash award. In addition, the top ten essayists will be honored at a banquet in Lansing, meet with Michigan's top governmental leaders, and be the featured guests at a Lansing Lugnuts minor league baseball game dedicated in their honor.

A team of finalist judges that includes a top Michigan Government official and the sponsoring teachers of last year's top two statewide winners will determine the ranking of the top ten statewide winners this year.

Several thousand eighth grade students from nearly 500 Michigan schools participated in the America & Me Essay Contest. The topic of the 2008-09 contest was "My Personal Michigan Hero."

Started in 1968 and open to all Michigan eighth grade students, the contest

encourages Michigan youngsters to explore their roles in America's future. As

sponsor of the contest, Farm Bureau Insurance has earned 11 national awards from the

Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge.



Mattie Newman with Mark Johnson of Farm Bureau Insurance.

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A FEW NOTABLE EVENTS FROM APRIL 2 - APRIL 8 • 2009

- The White House gives Chrysler 30 days to complete Fiat partnership.
- Government forces GM CEO Rick Wagner to resign.
- The Obama's have chosen to decorate the White House using their own funds.
- Dr. Zhivago composer, Maurice Jarre, dies at the age of 84.
- The late Aaron Spelling's 150 million dollar mansion is for sale.
- Tiger Woods birdies the 18th hole of Bay Hill for a dramatic win.
- Michigan State beats first-seed Louisville to make it to the final four in Detroit. This will be the fifth time Tom Izzo's team has made the trip.
- The Red River flood waters begin to ease in North Dakota but there are blizzard warnings ahead for Fargo.
- The long-running television series ER will air its finale this Thursday.
- A 45-year-old gunman kills eight during a shooting rampage in a North Carolina nursing home.
- NASA's Discovery returns to earth after 13 days in space.

- FFA wants bird strike records to be kept confidential.
- Global War on Terror now referred to as "Overseas Contingency Operation."
- The 1,776 foot skyscraper, Freedom Tower, that replaces the "Twin Towers" destroyed on 9/11, is renamed to "One World Trade Center."
- Three boys in southwest Michigan's Baroda Township have unearthed a mammoth bone.
- A U. S. soldier is convicted of murdering four Iraqi people and sentenced to 35 years in prison.
- Earth Hour was deemed a big success by environmentalists. The event began in Australia in 2007. Nearly 4,000 cities and towns in 88 countries dimmed nonessential lights from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.



Financial Focus

With Christopher C. Godbold
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HOW TO INVEST DURING A RECESSION

We are now finishing the 16th month of the recession, which began in December 2007, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research. Not only is this a long recession, but it's also a severe one, marked by painfully high levels of job losses, a sharply reduced credit flow and a drop in the value of many investments. Still, despite all the bad news, there are valid reasons to believe that brighter days lie ahead. But you don't have to wait for things to turn around before taking steps to help your own financial future.

Here are some actions to consider:

- Don't cut back on your 401(k). During difficult economic times, it's hard for many people to assume their jobs are safe. But if you are fairly confident your employment situation is secure, continue investing in your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. The tax advantages of these types of plans - not to mention the employer's match, if one is offered - make them ideal savings vehicles for retirement. Of course, your plan probably has taken a hit over the past year, but that's the case for many investments. If you've chosen a good mix of investments, your plan should recover at some point.
- Diversify, diversify, diversify. Generally speaking, it's not a good idea to tie up more than five percent of your portfolio in a single investment. Spread your investment dollars among a wide range of stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit and other securities. For a rough idea on how well you've diversified, ask yourself: "If the value of a few of my stocks and bonds declined and didn't recover, would it be extremely painful for me financially?" If the answer is

"yes," you probably need more diversification. Of course, diversification by itself cannot guarantee a profit or protect against loss, but it can give you more chances for success and reduce the effects of volatility on your portfolio.

- Think long term. Your investments may have lost 30 percent to 40 percent of their value from October 2007 to the present - which may seem like a long time. Yet quality investments often need much longer periods to show significant growth. So while it can be painful to endure short-term losses, you need to develop the discipline to hold your investments for many years.
- Don't reach for high yields. When the stock market is down, many investors turn to bonds that offer high yields, reasoning that bonds are always safer than stocks. Don't be fooled into this line of thinking; high-yield bonds mean high-risk bonds. If the issuer defaults, you could lose your principal. Stick with investment-grade bonds.
- Look for opportunities. Instead of avoiding the financial markets, look for good investment opportunities. Because investment prices have fallen so much, your dollars can now buy more shares. Historically, buying shares at lower prices has often led to higher returns over the long term. If you're receiving dividends, now is an especially good time to reinvest them.

You probably can't avoid all the negative effects of the recession. But by following the above suggestions, you can help avoid getting thrown off track on your journey toward your financial goals.

Students take on recycling challenge



Bushnell children entered the Kent County 2009 Earth Day Recycle Challenge. Children grew in their understanding of their part in taking care of our world by collecting plastic grocery bags.

During the past several weeks, families and teachers provided ongoing experiences and conversations regarding the importance of recycling. Before delivery for recycling, the bags were used to provide young children numerous math experiences as they practiced counting

by 1's, 2's, 5's, 10's, 100's and 1000's. Bushnell soared past their numerical goal, but more importantly learned how children and their families make a difference.

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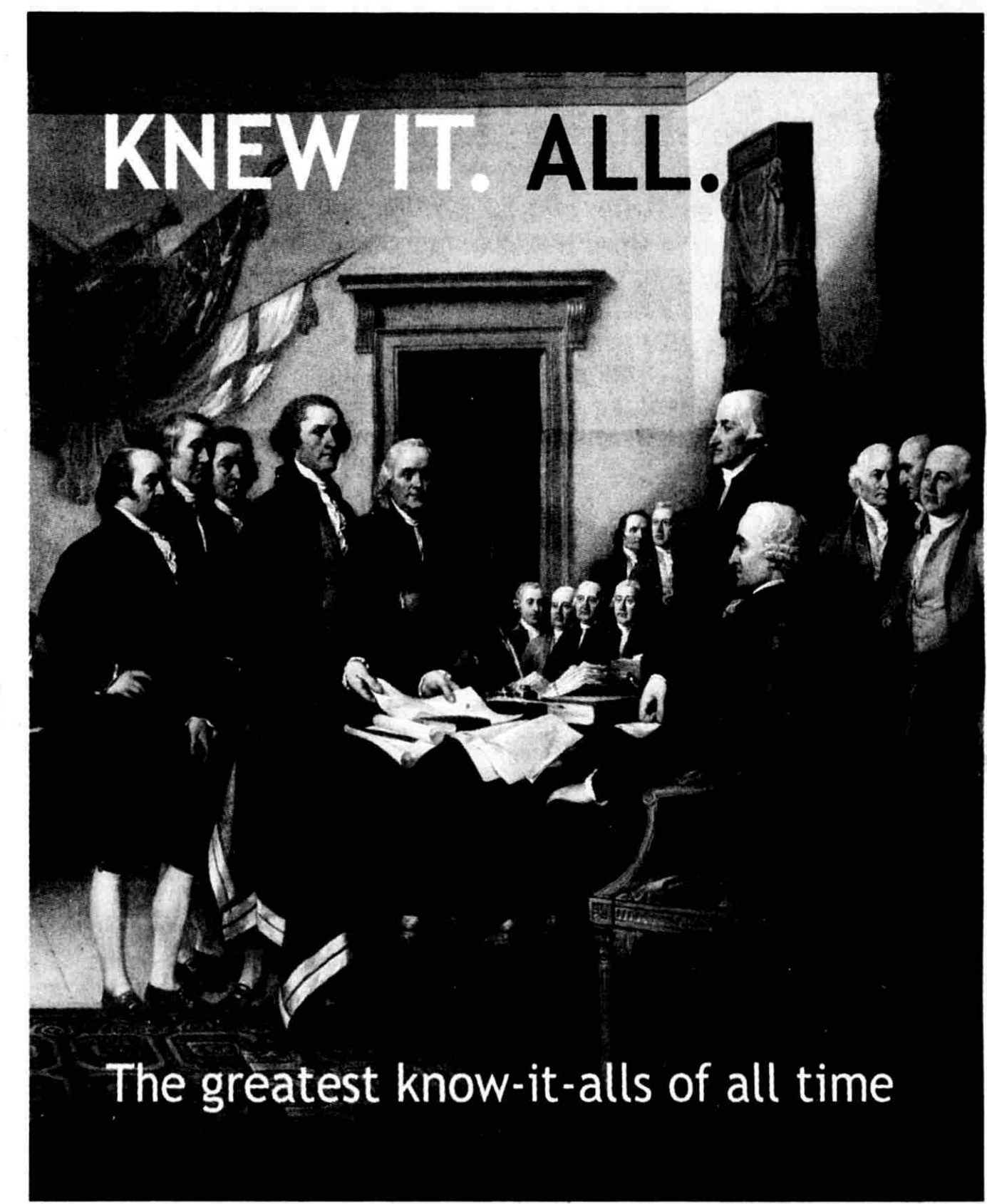
Nutrition is important at Bushnell

To celebrate "March is Nutrition Month," Kay Hahn, Director of Dining Services for Chartwells, visited many Bushnell first graders. By reading a story with healthy eating and lifestyle messages, children learned about differences in foods in various parts of the world. Children presented Hahn a 5-2-1 necklace from their gym class experience. They have learned to have five fruits or vegetables, not "two" much television, and one hour of exercise daily.



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