

the lowell ledger

wednesday • may • 11 • 2011

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funding the library



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student art



page 8

mayor's exchange day



page 9

mother of the day



page 8

Overwhelming citizen participation causes fire chief to close down education forum

by Shelly MacNaughton

Hundreds of parents, teachers, administrators and community members showed up at the VFW Flat River Post 8303 on Monday night for a legislative forum on education.

Former local news anchor, Suzanne Geha, was the moderator and legislative panelists included Dave Hildenbrand, Mark Jansen, David Agema, Brandon Dillon, Thomas Hooker, Lisa Posthumus Lyons, Pete MacGregor, Roy Schmidt and Ken Yonker.

Cars lined both sides of Alden Nash surrounding the VFW post. After about 15 minutes of introductions, the fire chief shut down the meeting because of the huge crowd that had gathered inside and out.

Moderator Geha began offering solutions. One suggestion was to have half of the crowd wait outside for half of the meeting and then have the crowd switch places, another was to hold the meeting outdoors.



Both attempts failed for one reason or another and it was decided the forum would be postponed until a proper venue could be found.

"Thank you all for being here, this clearly is not the venue. We exhausted a

Forum, continued, page 2



City crunches budget numbers in a work session, sets public hearings for May and June

by Emma Palova

The city officials worked on the 2011-2012 budget which again reflects tight economic times, decrease in revenues and expenditures and a low fund balance. The projected decrease in revenues is estimated at 11.6 percent due to decrease in taxable value and state shared revenues.

The highlight of the budget is the general fund which also funds local street improvements with one mill or \$90,000.

The property taxes levied are \$16.08 per \$1,000 of taxable value. This includes 0.25 mills for operating the Lowell Area Historical Museum. This millage is up for renewal in 2012.

"It will be brought before the council and the voters," said city manager Dave Pasquale.

No cost of living increases have been calculated into the budget for employees' salaries. The police

department budgets \$15,000 to purchase two 2010 leased cruisers to replace Impalas.

A total of \$75,000 is allocated to fire department operations. The city continues its refuse collection program where residents pay \$1.50 per bag and \$2 for yard waste. Red Creek Waste Services offers recycling and residents absorb the cost of it.

The city continues to make payments of \$337,185 on a 30-year bond issue for the city and police station.

A total of \$5,000 is allocated from the Lee Fund for park maintenance. The city budgeted \$11,000 for seasonal park employment, \$1,000 for vandalism and \$11,000 for utilities. There is a \$5 usage fee per participant.



Mayor Jim Hodges, mayor pro tem Sharon Ellison, councilmembers Maryalene LaPonsie and Jeff Altoft crunch budget numbers.

City budget, continued, page 8

Bluegrass returns to the fairgrounds

The Mayfest Bluegrass Music Festival, presented by the West Michigan Bluegrass Music Association (WMBMA), will be held at the Kent County Youth Fairgrounds in Lowell on May 20-22.

Bluegrass music is pure, honest American music, beautiful in its simplicity. There will be instrument workshops, a songwriter's contest, a barn and bake sale, craft and food vendors and plenty of campsite jammin'. Bluegrass music stage acts are scheduled all weekend long.

The headliner this year is Danny Paisley and the Southern Grass Bluegrass Band. Those attending should bring lawn chairs for the show inside the concert building. Show will go on rain or shine.

On Friday, the White River Pickers, Blue Water Ramblers, Uncle Betty and The Bluegrass Echoes will entertain from 6:00 to 10 pm. Friday admission is \$10.

Saturday's venue runs from noon till 10:00 pm with Paisley at 4:00 pm and 8:35 pm, plus The Doodads, The Olson Brothers, Family Traditions and the Mona Shores Fiddlers. A price of \$17 covers the entire day's events.

Sunday at 10:00 am starts off with the gospel sounds of The Bluegrass Echoes along with audition bands and a chance to win \$100. Admission is \$5.

Admission price for the whole weekend is \$20 in advance and \$25 at the gate.

For more information you can call WMBMA president, Dave Simmonds, at 616-897-6220 or visit their website www.wmbma.org

50 CENTS



Forum, continued

lot of options. This is not a conspiracy to shut people out," said representative Lisa Posthumus Lyons. This crowd came look-

ing for an open discussion on Michigan's budget crisis, Governor Rick Snyder's budget proposal and what it all means for education.

They left sorely disappointed amid mass confusion.

Those attending did hear a couple introductions before the meeting was halted. "I am introducing a bill that would require all educators to pay 20 percent of health care," said State Senator Mark Jansen. "For the first time in the history of this state we are taking money from the school aid fund without a commitment to pay it back," said State Representative Brandon Dillon.



Cars lined Alden Nash as residents gathered for Monday's legislative forum on education.

DDA approves 2011-2012 budget, appropriates \$6,000 for summer concerts

by Emma Palova

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) approved the 2011-2012 budget last Thursday. The DDA is funded through

Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA) totaling \$725,131 for the upcoming budget year including the beginning balance of \$233,384. The expenditures are

\$299,025. The ending balance is \$426,106.

There is no requirement for a certain fund balance, according to city manager Dave Pasquale.

The DDA has a capital outlay of \$120,000 which has provided a match for grant funding for riverbank improvements and the reconstruction of North Center Street. The DDA match

is \$50,000 to an MDNR trust fund application, for \$300,000, for proposed improvements along on the riverbank. The total local share for the riverbank project including monies from the community funds is \$150,000.

The city can make changes to the east river-

DDA, continued, page 3

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CHESS CLUB CAR WASH

The Lowell Middle School chess club will be holding a car wash on Sat., May 14 from 11 am to 3 pm at Tractor Supply.

BLUEGRASS MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bluegrass music concerts Fri., Sat., and Sun., May 20-22, at Lowell fairgrounds. Campground jamming, instrument workshops, slow jams. Huge barn sale/silent auction, vendors, bake sale. Songwriter contest, kids activities. Camping available. For details call 896-6220 or see www.wmbma.org.

PLANT SALE

Too many plants? Call Karen at 897-7808 to donate to the Memorial Day weekend plant sale. All proceeds go to the LAS equestrian team.

LHS CLASS OF 1961

The Lowell High School Class of 1961 will be holding their 50th class reunion on July 9 and are desperately looking for classmates: Jane Potter, Tom Evans and Charles Briggs. If you have any information call Linda Barnes at 897-9924.

Feel free to send your event information to the Ledger for Along Main St. All submission requests for Along Main St. are subject to space limitations. The Ledger makes no assurances that they will appear in print. To ensure that an event notification will appear in the Ledger, it is best to place a paid advertisement. All efforts will be made to place suitable items in the Along Main St. column but they are printed at the discretion of the publisher. For profit events, church services, yard sales and the like, will not appear in this column.

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- THOR (PG-13) 4:35, 7:00, 9:30
- SOMETHING BORROWED (PG-13) 5:00, 7:20, 9:40
- WATER FOR ELEPHANTS (PG-13) 4:05, 6:40, 9:20
- FAST FIVE (PG-13) 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
- PRIM (PG) 6:50, 9:10
- HOODWINKED TOO (PG) 4:50

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School libraries benefit from collaborative fundraising effort

The Lowell Rotary Club led a collaboration of local service clubs in raising funds for Lowell School libraries to purchase new books. Partners with Rotary for this project were the Alto Lions Club, the Murray Lake Family Links, the Alto Family Links, the Cherry Creek kids, and Lowell High School's Interact club. Each group developed its own fundraisers and met their individual commitments totaling \$4,950.

The Lowell Area Community Fund matched all the funds raised so the total gift to the school libraries was \$9,900. All funds were collected and the grant was managed through the Lowell Rotary Foundation.

"This collaborative project helped the school libraries immensely. Our students get very excited every time we have new books for them to read; they literally can hardly wait to check out the newest arrivals," said Christine Beachler. "We are extremely grateful for this amazing opportunity and wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all of the wonderful people that made this possible," she added.

The monies were distributed as follows, \$1,000 to Lowell Rotary; \$1,000 to Alto Lions; \$1,000 to Murray Lake Family Links; \$1,000 to Alto PTO; \$750 to Interact; \$200 to Cherry Creek kids' piggy bank fundraiser and \$4950 to the Lowell Area Community Fund.



Pictured, front row, left to right: Jaron DeVito (Cherry Creek student), Breckon Pawloski (Cherry Creek student), Hannah Diamond (Cherry Creek student), a future Alto student (name not available), Justin Wade (Murray Lake student), and Steven Rickert (Murray Lake student); back row, left to right: Shelli Otten (Cherry Creek principal), Paula Blumm (Lowell Rotary Service committee chair), Greg Flick (president of the Lowell Rotary Foundation), Conner Swift (Lowell High School Interact club), Jeff Wilterink (president of Lowell Rotary), Christine Beachler (director of Library Services, Lowell Schools), Maggie Duimstra (Alto Family Links board), Taryn Endres (Lowell High School Interact club), Tammy Wade (Murray Lake Family Links board), and Kris Rickert (Murray Lake Family Links board).

DDA, continued

bank improvements to reflect what the public wants. West riverbank improvements remain a funding issue that may be resolved

when the bonds on the city hall are paid off.

"We do not want to recreate the amphitheatre to take away from summer

concerts," said chairman Jim Reagan.

The DDA appropriates \$25,000 for downtown marketing and \$20,000 for pro-

motions. Pasquale said that outstanding bond issues on the city hall will be paid off in two years.

"The bonds will be paid off," said Pasquale, "there will be new funding opportunities."

Out of the DDA budget \$140,000 is transferred into the city general fund for debt service.

"This reflects that the

city hall is in the DDA district," said Pasquale.

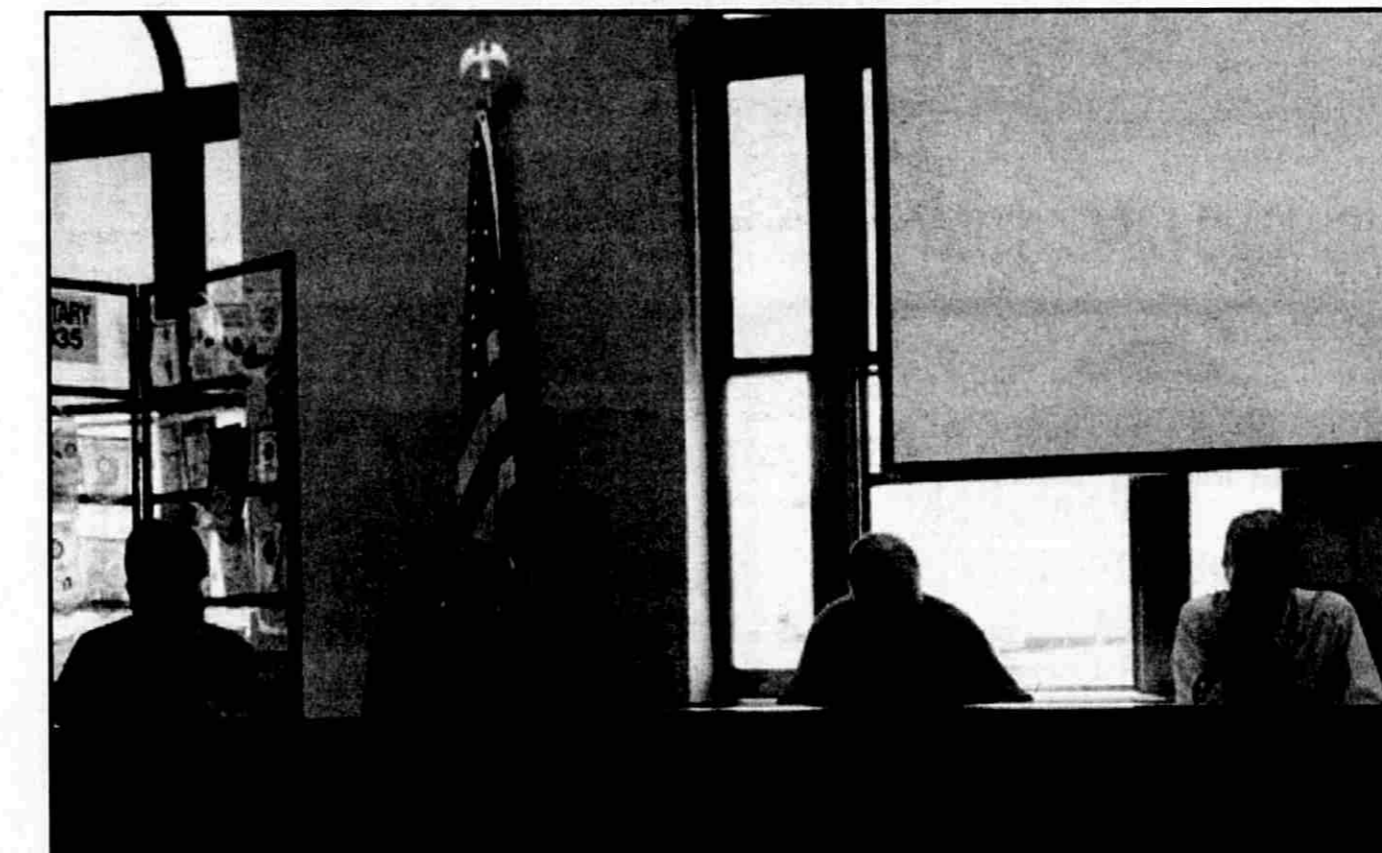
In related business, the summer concerts on the Riverwalk are only a month away. The series will open with 126th Army Band.

"The concerts bring people in," said Reagan. "The location sets the series apart."

The DDA appropriates \$6,000 for the "Sizzlin'

Summer Concert Series that annually runs from June through the end of August.

The total cost of the summer concerts is \$35,800. They are funded through a mix of monies from the Lowell Area Community Fund, DDA, entertainment sponsor, 14 corporate sponsors and concessions.



Mike Sprenger, Greg Canfield, Dave Pasquale and Jim Reagan.

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BIGGEST TREE CONTEST

In the city of Lowell is on for 2011. The contest is being sponsored by the Lowell Arbor Board. This is the third annual Big Tree Contest.

To be eligible the tree must be in the Lowell city limits and the deadline is Sept. 18, 2011. The top three entries receive plaques that can be placed on or adjacent to the tree. The 2009 winner is an oak tree at Schneider Manor on Bowes Rd. The 2010 winner is an elm tree adjacent to Duke Thomet's residence, 412 N. Division.

CONTEST DETAILS

Date of Contest: April 25, 2011 - Sept. 18, 2011

Winner announced at Harvest Celebration in Lowell Oct. 8, 2011

- Tree size will be confirmed by an arborist & a professional landscaper.

Entry form available at City Hall or City of Lowell website: www.ci.lowell.mi.us

— — — — — **ENTRY FORM** — — — — —

Name _____
Phone _____
Address _____
Location of tree within the city limits (nearest cross streets): _____

Species of tree (if known): _____
Girth of tree in inches (as measured 4.5 feet above the ground): _____
Landowner of property where tree is located: _____
Landowner phone(s): _____

Entries postmarked by Sept. 18, 2011 to:

BIG TREE CONTEST c/o Lowell Arbor Committee
301 E. Main St. • Lowell, MI 49331

financial focus



Christopher C. Godbold

Own a small business? Consider these retirement plans

For a variety of reasons, many people, particularly those in the baby boom generation, are considering retiring later than they might have originally planned. If you're in this group, you'll want to take full advantage of those extra working years by contributing as much as you can to a retirement plan that can help you build resources, defer taxes and, ultimately, maximize income. And if you own a small business, you've got some attractive plans from which to choose.

Let's look at two of these retirement plans — the "owner-only" 401(k) and the defined benefit plan.

If you have no employees other than your spouse or a partner, you can establish an "owner-only" 401(k),

also known as an individual 401(k). This plan offers many of the same advantages of a traditional 401(k): a range of investment options, tax-deductible contributions and the opportunity for tax-deferred earnings growth. You may even be able to choose a Roth option for your 401(k), which allows you to make after-tax contributions that have the opportunity to grow tax free.

Your owner-only 401(k) contributions consist of two parts: salary deferral and profit sharing. In 2011, you can defer up to \$16,500 of income, or \$22,000 if you're 50 or older. The amount of your profit-sharing contribution is based on your earnings. The sum of your employer contribution and your salary deferral contributions can't exceed \$49,000 in 2011 (or \$54,500 if you're 50 or older). Keep in mind that if your spouse is employed by your business, you each can contribute the maximum amount allowed.

You've got considerable flexibility in funding your owner-only 401(k). Both the salary deferral and the profit-sharing contributions are discretionary, so you can change them at any time based on your business's profitability.

Now, let's move on to the defined benefit plan,

which might be appropriate for you if you are highly compensated and have no other employees. By establishing a defined benefit plan, you'll be providing yourself with a monthly payment (or "benefit") for life, beginning at the retirement age specified by your plan. In 2011, the yearly benefit limit is \$195,000.

The amount you can contribute to your defined benefit plan each year is based on several variables, including your current age, your compensation level and your retirement age. But you'll certainly be able to contribute large amounts: A defined benefit plan is the only retirement account that allows contributions in excess of the limits placed on 401(k)s and other defined-contribution plans. Generally speaking, the closer you get to retirement, the larger your maximum yearly contributions will be. (This is because you'll have fewer years left in which to fund your defined benefit.) And since your defined benefit contributions are tax-deductible, you are, in effect, getting a big boost from the government to fund a generous retirement plan.

Here's one more benefit to owner-only 401(k) and defined benefit plans: You can contribute to both of

them at the same time. But before you choose either or both of them, consult with your tax and financial advisors. After all, you work hard to help provide for a comfortable retirement to-

morrow — so you'll want a retirement plan working hard for you today. This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.



At Your Local Library

Kent District Library programs at Englehardt Branch, 200 N. Monroe St. For additional information call 616-784-2007.

Pokemon! Yu-Gi-Oh! Bakugan!

Calling all experienced Pokemon, Yu-Gi-Oh and Bakugan players - join our gaming group to play, trade and meet with other fans of these popular games. For ages 6 and up. Wednesday, May 18, 6:30 pm.

Pajama Storytime

For families who can't come to the library during the day. Pajama Storytime offers an evening of stories and fun. Bring your teddy bear or other snugly friend, pajamas optional. For children ages 6 and under with a caregiver. Wednesday, May 25, 6:30 pm.

business matters

Greenridge Realty announced that Amy Reedy received Realtor of the Month in April. This award recognizes Reedy for her outstanding success and achievements.

viewpoint

to the editor

an educator's perspective on school funding cuts

Dear Editor,

Whenever an economy is in crisis citizens look for a cause and a solution. They want to fix the problem so that people can start living comfortably again. As an educator in Michigan, I also feel the pinch of an economy that is supposed to be recovering. Society, in general, and lawmakers specifically, seem to feel that by targeting educators and education funding, the problem of an economy in trouble will be solved. Perhaps in the short-term the leaking economy will be patched by diverting education funding, cutting pensions, and cutting teacher wages. In the long-term, our society will suffer be-

cause we will become more ignorant and short-sighted without appropriate education. The patch on the economy will eventually burst and the need for a highly-trained work force will not be met because we will not have a workforce qualified for the jobs. Many of my own family members feel that educators are getting what they deserve and have too long asked for more than anyone else. This response contains ten things you may not know about teachers.

Maybe you didn't know:

1. Most high school teachers currently have class sizes of 32 or more students in each section they teach.

Many elementary school teachers have classes of 25 or more students. Please think back to the number of classmates you might have had when you were in school; I bet the numbers were significantly fewer.

2. Teachers are currently paying for retirement four times. We pay into Social Security, we pay into our pension, we pay additional money into the pension of already retired teachers, and lastly we pay into our own retirement plans hoping that some day we might be able to afford to retire.

3. We pay for our continuing education that is required to maintain our licenses, which are updated every five years. Many of us also spend \$25,000-\$40,000 of our own pockets for master's degrees.

4. We pay for teaching supplies (because budget cuts no longer have items like paper and art supplies factored in), treats for your children at holidays, some of our own copies, and many of us help support students who are struggling financially, as a staff or individually.

5. We pay into scholarship funds for your children so they may pursue higher education.

6. We pay for insurance. Contrary to what you may think, teachers pay into their insurance programs, sometimes based on concessions we have negotiated in our contracts, but also many teachers do not have "teacher" insurance, but have a

spouse's insurance instead.

7. Our annual reviews are now based on student performance. This may seem like a good idea at first, but think about how you would feel if you were evaluated based on something out of your control. If you are a manager and your employee refuses to come to work, should you be marked down on your own evaluation because of that? Many educators struggle on a daily basis with students who are perpetually tardy or consistently absent. I average 5-10 students gone each class period on a daily basis. That would be an equivalent of 1/3 of your work force not showing up each day. How are we supposed to instruct a student who isn't in his or her seat? Grade point averages, and yes, standardized test scores are affected when the student is not present to learn the required material. Should a school district be taken over by the state, should a teacher lose his or her job because students don't attend school?

8. Maybe you didn't know that most teachers who achieve tenure deserve a little job security because they have worked hours after school, love teaching your children, and constantly work to design and implement stimulating lesson plans. Many argue that there are poor teachers who achieve tenure, so we should attack the tenure pro-

cess, but have a

To The Editor, continued, page 7

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Love Your Hometown



By Shelly MacNaughton

125 Years Ago The Lowell Journal May 14, 1886

Occasionally a speckled mouth trout is found in Grand River, near the mouth of Springbrook. The Lowell Township board of review will meet at Supervisor Mitchell's office on Monday, May 24. Theo B. Carter has purchased the milk delivery and route of R. Ryder and will continue the business as of yore.

100 Years Ago The Lowell Ledger May 11, 1911

Headline: Four Small Trout cost Freeporter \$2.00 each

Two gaslight spearsman were arrested at Murray Lake about midnight, Monday night, by F.J. Maynard Lansing State Deputy game warden and Deputy Sheriff Scott of Lowell.

75 Years Ago The Lowell Ledger and Alto Solo May 7, 1936

Corinne Callier died at 10:40 Wednesday night of this week in Blodgett hospital. She was 13-years-old a week ago last Friday.

50 Years Ago The Lowell Ledger May 11, 1961

Ron Wilson and Roger Odell were the two boys of the local high school track team who placed in the Regional XII of Godfrey Lee Field, in Grand Rapids, last Saturday to give Lowell a tenth place in a field of 17 Class B schools. Coach Bob Perry will take Ron Wilson to Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Ferry Field, to compete at the State Class B track and field meet. Ron ran the mile, won the Regional's mile championship with a time of 4:42, this being one of the better times in the state. Roger Odell placed third in the 880-run with a time of 2:09.

25 Years Ago The Grand Valley Ledger May 14, 1986

The Lowell Fire Department was called out to two major fires. Fire completely destroyed the Margaret Nowicki residence at 10712 Bennett Road on Friday, May 9. The residents left the house about 9:45 pm and the Lowell Fire Department received the call an hour later at 10:45.

The fire apparently had a good start, as the firemen spotted heavy smoke while enroute and still a considerable distance away.

On Tuesday, May 6, the Lowell Fire Department was called to assist Alto with a fire at the Darwin LaLone residence of 11888 Cascade Rd. A fire of undetermined origin caused about \$20,000 in smoke and damage. No one was home when the fire was reported at 9:09 pm. The fire remains under investigation.

the ledger

Letters To The Editor:

The Lowell Ledger welcomes your Letters to the Editor. Letters are required to bear the author's signature, phone number and address (for verification purposes only, not for publication). Letters will be published at the discretion of the publisher. All letters are subject to editing for length and grammar. Thank you letters, advertising or personal attacks will not be printed.

Letters may be submitted via email to: ledger@lowellbuyersguide.com ("to the Editor" in subject line) or dropped off or mailed to: The Lowell Ledger, 105 N. Broadway, Lowell, MI 49331. Also, our website, www.lowellbuyersguide.com has a link to submit emails on the left side of the page.

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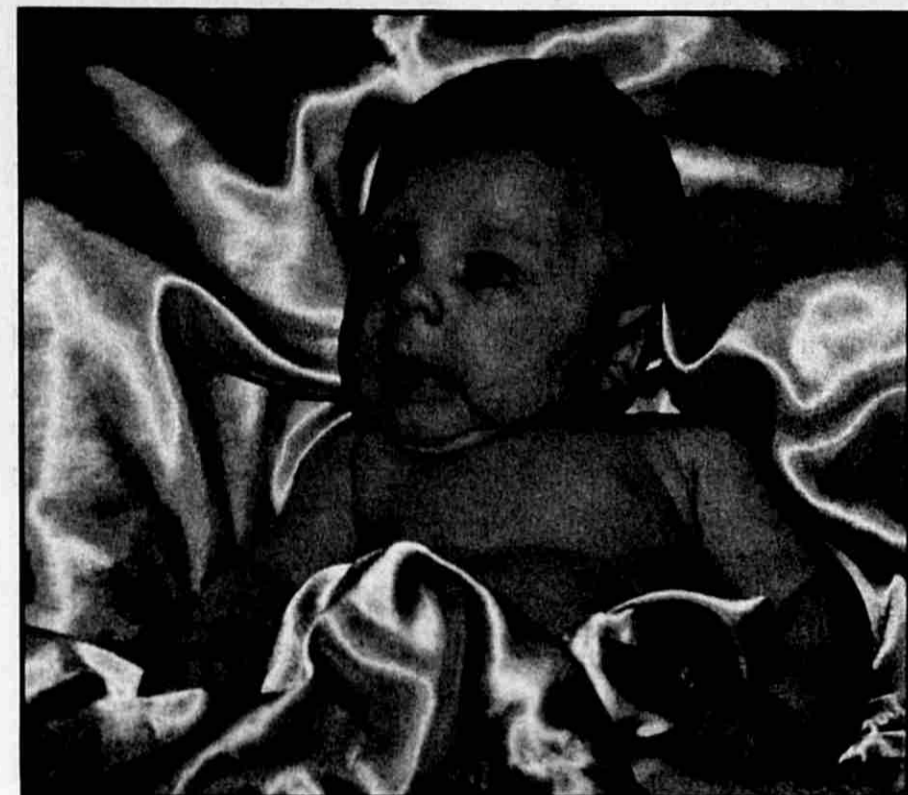
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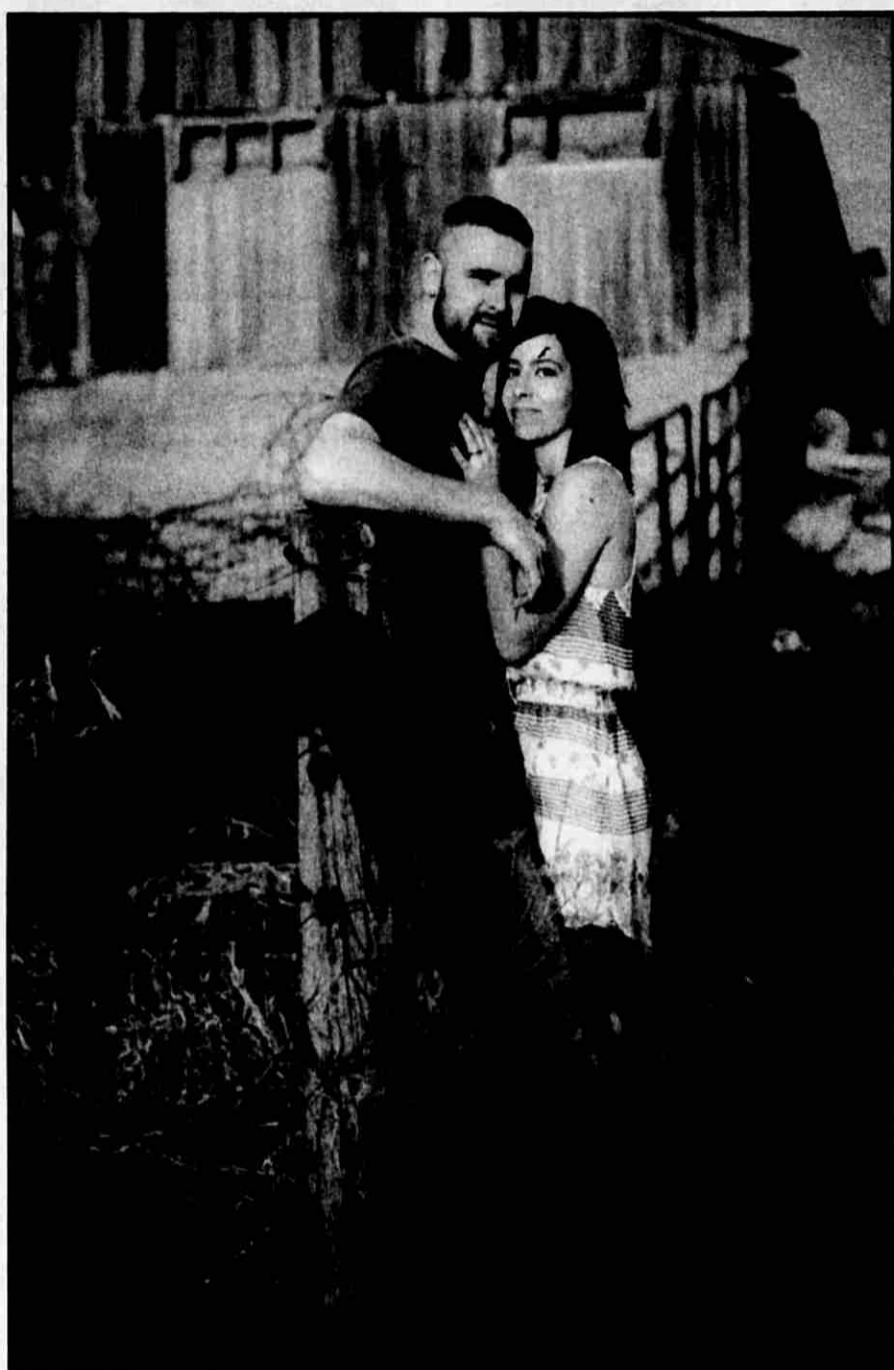
Alan Thomas McCauley

Moss and Renee McCauley of Lowell are proud to announce the birth of their son, Alan Thomas "Cash," born March 19, 2011, weighing 9 lbs. 3 oz.

Grandparents are Alan McCauley of Ohio, Dawn Jones of Missouri, and Terry and Jean Nugent of Lowell.

engagements Lynch/Pritchett

Hess/Klahn



Eric Klahn and Corinne Hess

The marriage of Corinne Susanne Hess and Eric Douglas Klahn, both of Lowell, will be celebrated on June 25, 2011. The future bride is a graduate of Lowell High School and Grand Valley State University. Her parents

are Susan and Steve Hess. The future groom is a graduate of Lowell High School and attended Lansing Community College. His parents are Kathy and David Hoseth and the late Gordon Klahn.



Renner Pritchett and Laura Lynch

Announcing the engagement of Laura Lynch to Renner Pritchett, both of Lowell. Laura was raised in Lansing; Renner (Cleveland) was born in Alabama. Nuptials will be taken June 11, 2011.

happy birthday!

- MAY 11**
Carol Briggs,
Joel Uzarski,
Kaczanowski,
Hoag, Benjamin Hoag.
- MAY 12**
Michele Lindhout -
Barber, Jessica Covell,
Carrie Kiczenski, Ian
Duiven, Ryan Timmers,
Christine Vickers.
- MAY 13**
Melanie Ligman, Jean
Daverman, Ed Roth III.
- MAY 14**
Winnifred Snieder,
Kathy Thomas.
- MAY 15**
Maxine Gasper.
- MAY 16**
Richie Ford, Kristi
Ford, Angela Dixon, Ryan
Phillips, Janet Boerema.
- MAY 17**
Maurice Hannah, Andy
Dibble, Shawn Witherell,
Blake Yeiter.

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health



With Drs. Paul Gauthier, Jim Lang, Wayne A. Christenson III, John G. Meier & Tracy Lixie

Know your family medical history

Medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, cancers and clotting disorders develop as the result of many factors. Some are caused by environmental factors, such as poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, drinking and chemical exposures. Some are caused by genetic factors that are passed from one generation to another, while some are the result of both environmental and genetic factors.

Diabetes Mellitus Type 2 (adult onset diabetes) has a strong genetic component. This means that relatives of Type 2 diabetics have a high likelihood of becoming diabetic in their lifetime. This can often be prevented with proper diet, exercise and weight control.

Heart disease often has a strong genetic component and tends to run in families. People with a family history of heart disease should be sure to monitor and control their blood pressure, control their cholesterol, not use tobacco and control their weight with diet and exercise.

Hypertension (high blood pressure) often develops as a result of many factors, but the biggest factor is family history. If you have family members with hypertension, it is important that you have your blood pressure monitored regularly. You should also control your cholesterol, not use tobacco and control your weight with diet and exercise.

Many cancers tend to run in families. The most common ones are breast, colon and prostate. If you have a family member with one of these cancers, it is important that you begin a cancer screening program sooner and more regularly than the average person.

Clotting disorders are often hereditary. Clotting disorders can place a person at increased risk of a blood clot which can travel to the lung and cause a pulmonary embolism, or to the brain and cause a stroke. People with clotting disorders often develop blood clots easier than the average person as the result of trauma, surgeries, or prolonged immobilization.

Many people fail to realize the importance of knowing their own family medical history. They often do not realize that they may be at risk of developing the same conditions that their siblings, parents or grandparents have been diagnosed with. It is very important that everyone learn not only their immediate family medical history, but also their distant family history and share that information with their health care provider. Having regular physical exams and sharing your family's medical history with your health care provider is the best way to prevent your family's medical problems from becoming your own.

To The Editor, continued

cess, like it is the fault of all teachers that there are a few unmotivated ones. In reality, giving tenure to a poor teacher is a result of poor administration. If an administrator does not "weed out" the less motivated teachers during the provisional contract years, then the administrator has not done his or her job. (I would like to qualify this statement by saying many administrators are working hard and doing a fabulous job. I am not going to attack administrators in general because it would be unjust for the hard-working ones.)

9. Most teachers are parents and we are concerned about the large class sizes our own children are in at school. We are worried that the teachers who really care about their students will get discouraged or will no longer be able to afford to be in the profession because of a society that targets them.

10. Maybe you didn't know that many teachers feel undervalued, feel they are not considered professionals, and feel the lack of respect given to them by a society who does not value education anymore. Test scores and dollar signs hold more value than a quality education.

I pay the same high gas prices that you do. I live paycheck-to-paycheck just like many of you. I am criticized by family members, the public, and my government for working hard every day to educate your children and teach them to be valuable members of society. My summers are spent taking classes, researching information, and developing lesson plans that will engage young minds and teach them to think independently. I hold a master's degree, but I am excluded from the classification of "professional." I earn less in a year than many who criticize me. Targeting education and educators is not the answer to our suffer-

ing economy. The jobs that have been entering our state are already asking for a more highly trained work force. How are we supposed to fill

that demand with an educational system that is undervalued?

Katrina Alexander
Lowell

pondering library problems

Dear Ledger,

A long time ago in Honduras I was mistaken for a "Limey." Whereas the English of old were quietly smug, Los Gringos of today are loudly self-congratulatory. They are endlessly "proud" and "proudly." We shall see if that impresses the Asians when they sail over to collect debts.

However, if one is in the mood to wax "proud," regard the Kent District Library: now there is a good outfit. Some weeks ago I was on the home page of the

Royal Oak Public Library and saw an amazing sidebar regarding the possible closing of the Troy library, what it would mean for patrons in the immediate area.

Tony Troy, la-de-bloody-da. Big city with a high school offering five languages, rich burg with a huge shopping center, an office avenue sporting an honest-to-god skyscraper and hundreds of hectares of banal but overpriced houses like Rhett Butler's. I travel widely.

So here we have overrated Troy which was contemplating end times for the library at the same time Lowell's humble Englehardt was maintaining a six day a week operation, albeit on a truncated basis.

Troy is the east pole of the axis of wealth with the other pole as west "Bloomy." All this in the wealthiest county in the tri-state - and they cannot afford a ham sandwich or a library. As my dear mother would say, "The more they got, the more they cry."

The library situation is now seemingly resolved. Troy is going to be adult like Kent County. Their motto is: "City of Tomorrow...Today." Do tell.

G.M. Ross
Lowell

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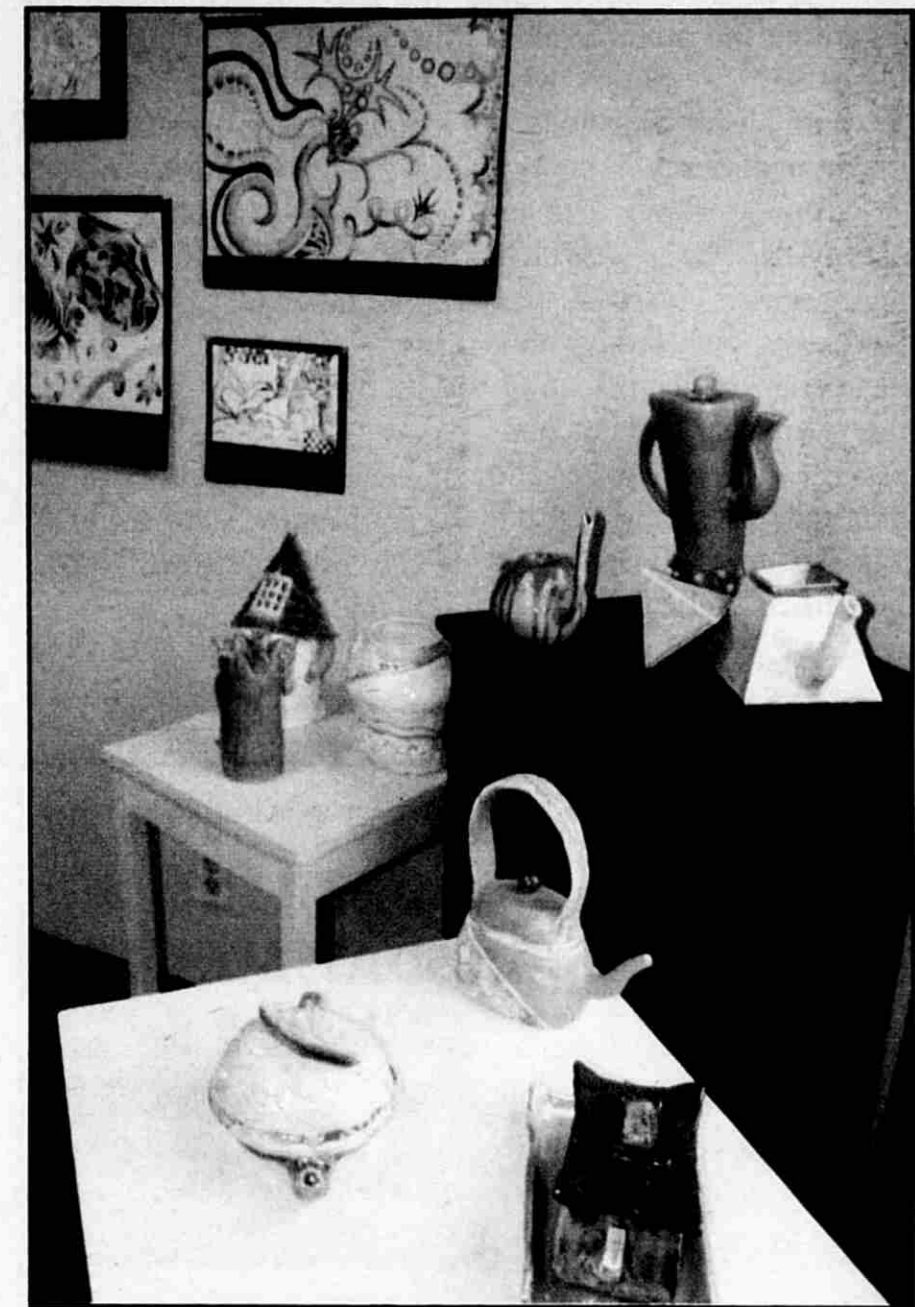
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Student art on display at Lowell Area Arts Council

The gallery at the Lowell Area Arts Council now features Lowell middle and high school student art, through May 26, with opening reception on May 10. "Art education is paramount to student success,"

Alto elementary principal Randy Fleenor. "It provides an avenue for self-expression, creative release and it builds confidence." The exhibit is a good representation of the student artwork accompanied by narratives next to the artworks.

"The teachers work hard to provide a broad representation of the art explorations of students from all of the K-12 grades," said Lorain Smalligan, arts council director. Lowell Area Arts Council supports the Lowell Area Schools' visual art education programs with two exhibits in April and in May. "We are very lucky to live in a community that is so supportive of the arts,"



City budget, continued

Lowell will be getting a brand new street with 80 percent of federal funding. The North Center Street project has already started with the water main and next week the construction is going out for bids. The city received an additional \$112,000 in CDBG block grant funding from Kent County. "You're getting a brand new street," said Pasquale. Other streets: Gee, Foreman, Boves and South Hudson, have been reconstructed also under a federal program. There are no user rate increases for water and waste-

water funds. The airport is still looking at becoming a general utility airport, according to Pasquale. The Department of Public Works (DPW) budgets \$19,500 for crack sealing over and above regular maintenance. Crack sealing has to be done every four to five years, according to DPW director Dan DesJarden. Due to the retirement of water plant supervisor George Regan, the city will be exploring options of internal promotion or contracting out to United Water for operation of the plant. United Water already runs the operations of the wastewater treatment plant. There has also been an increase in health insurance and pensions for employees. Mayor pro tem Sharon Ellison questioned whether money is being budgeted for building maintenance so the city does not have to rely on community funds. "We're always catching up," she said. "I mean long-term building maintenance. What do we do in 20 years, if [the] community fund is not there?" DesJarden said he can't

get ahead enough to budget for the equipment fund. The Lowell Light and Power offered to loan money for equipment to DPW, but it would be just another loan, according to DesJarden. There used to be an equipment replacement schedule, but the department got away from it. Part of the problem, according to DesJarden, is that the city, every year, adds something new outdoors. In recent years, these additions included the dog and the skateboard park and municipal parking lot on Avery. "Your department is on a shoestring of all departments," said Ellison. "I'd like to see an increase because it's such a visible part of our community." The department maintains two miles of sidewalks. DesJarden estimated \$90,000 to \$100,000 to get the equipment replacement back on schedule. Also, \$8,000 was budgeted for the assessor to reassess parcels to include pictures and upgrade data. "It wasn't kept up," said councilmember Jeff Altoft. "So many parcels were not assessed in the right category. We're playing catch up." In related business, the council will consider the purchase of a new video camera, tripod and SD cards, for approximately \$600 to \$650, for videotaping of all meetings. The budget is up for public hearing on May 16 and June 6.

2011 Buyers Guide Mother of the Day enjoys special treatment

Bouncing around and cracking jokes with merchants, 2011 Mother of the Day Jennifer Branagan enjoyed every minute of her special day on Wednesday. It was a day of pampering, attention, discoveries, food and fun in the sunshine. Driving in a GMC Terrain with a rearview camera, Branagan was accompanied by her mother-in-law Shar and stepdaughter Brittany. The phone kept ringing with congratulations. Husband Ty closely followed in his own car so he could haul home all the gifts. Ty nominated Jenn

for the contest with a sentimental few sentences that said it all. "She has taken on me and my four kids and she has provided a house full of love, laughter and communication," Ty wrote. Jenn shared their story during an interview at the Lowell Ledger offices in the morning. She met Ty on a blind date at a Griffins hockey game nine years ago. "I knew I was going to marry him," she said. Not even the presence of four stepchildren could change anything. After eight months, they set up a "coincidental" meeting on a Kent County Trail for some rollerblading and biking to introduce the children to Jenn. "This is my friend," Ty said. That's how Jenn got to meet Brittany, 15; Josh 14; Austin 12 and Makyla, 11. All are students of the Lowell Area Schools. Then Brittany invited Jenn to a birthday party and everything was sealed. The couple were married on the Muskegon River in October of 2004. "My two boys walked her down the trail," Ty said. Jenn works as an independent medical transcriptionist, which allows her the flexibility



Mother of the Day Jennifer Branagan begins her special day. continued, page 15

Belding visits Lowell during mayor exchange day

Belding city officials visited Lowell for the annual mayor exchange day last Friday. The event highlighted the community and public buildings starting in the morning with a welcome by the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce. Lowell will go to Belding on May 20. The purpose of the event is to showcase communities of similar size.

The officials toured the Riverwalk and the Englehardt Public Library, the Lowell Area Historical Museum, Look Memorial Fire Station, Lowell Ambulance, skateboard park and dog park, the Lowell Water Treatment Plant, riding a tour of the city, Lowell High School, Lowell Airport, and Wege property. "We had a good time,"

said city clerk Betty Morlock. "It was a beautiful day, everything went smooth. They really liked the city hall."

Belding has a historical old city hall next to the Covered Mall.

Mayor Jim Hodges said Lowell enjoyed the wonderful visit with Belding. Mayor Roger Wills used to live in Lowell. Each member of the mayor delegations received a small gift bag from the local merchants.

"It was a good exchange," said Hodges. In the afternoon, there was rest and relaxation time at the Main Street Inn, finally a tour of the city hall and the police department, social time in the city council chambers, dinner and mayor exchange day presentation at the city hall.



Belding mayor Roger Wills and Lowell mayor Jim Hodges with Belding city officials: Nancy Wills, mayor pro tem Andrea Belding, councilmembers Jon Bunce and Mike Scheid, city manager Randy DeBruine, police chief Dale Nelson and city clerk Karen Thomas and Lowell city officials: Chris Hodges, Jeff Altoft, Andrew Schrauben, city clerk Betty Morlock, and city manager Dave Pasquale.



Lowell mayor Jim Hodges and Belding mayor Roger Wills.

We have struck a blow against terrorism



Sen. Carl Levin

At 10 o'clock on a Sunday night I was in the terminal at Detroit Metro Airport. I had gone through the usual airport security drills - shoes off, liquids in plastic bags, and all the other inconveniences designed to keep us safe. And it was in December 2009 that a would-be terrorist sought to bomb an airliner as it landed in Detroit.

A few hours later, my wife Barbara and I joined a different scene: thousands of cheering young people waving American flags and singing patriotic songs in the early morning darkness outside of the White House, part of an outpouring of relief and emotion across the nation.

In the wake of this news, we should first turn to

So I was surrounded by reminders large and small of how the threat of terrorism has affected our lives when Defense Secretary Gates called me with the momentous news that our forces had succeeded in raiding a compound in Pakistan and killing Osama bin Laden.

those who still carry the grief and loss of that September morning about 10 years ago, to those who have lost loved ones in the fight against terrorism in the years since, and to those who carry wounds of body, mind or spirit from that war. The death of Osama bin Laden cannot bring back the lives lost to his monstrous acts. But it can, I hope, bring some measure of relief from those losses.

And we should turn with thanks and admiration to the men and women of our armed forces and the intelligence community. For them and their families, the last decade has been one of long separations, uncertainty and danger. And yet, time

and time again, they have answered their nation's call with courage, with competence and with skill. They have once again earned our utmost gratitude.

We also should commend President Obama for his courage and for his care in ordering the military mission to capture or kill Osama bin Laden. The president courageously rejected the alternative options of launching a bombing mission, a missile mission, or waiting until there was more evidence of bin Laden.

Levin, continued, page 14

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Red Arrow SPORTS

Spotlight On Sports

With Shane Beach

Each week, Shane Beach will visit Lowell High School athletes to find out a bit more about each one and get a closer look at the kids we're all so proud of in the community.

When did you start playing softball and how did you get interested in the sport?

I started with t-ball at age five. My mom played in college (Grand Rapids Community College) and got me interested.

What position/s do you play?

I'm a senior. I pitch and play outfield, mostly right field.

What are your biggest strengths on the ball field?

I would say I am an encouraging teammate. Pitching and outfield are also strengths of mine.

What's your favorite food?

Meat and mashed potatoes for sure.

What do you do for fun?

I like to stay busy; I run, I like to shop and spend time with friends.

What are your plans after high school?

I am going to Grand Valley State University. I am going to major in business hospitality and minor in Spanish.

What are some of your goals this season?

Win conference and hopefully win another district title. We'd like to add a little 2011 to the banner in the gym. We have a showdown with Northview, in a couple weeks, who we'd like to beat since they beat us last year.

This Week - Kaylie Petroetie Lowell Varsity Softball

What makes the sport of softball special?

Each person adds a different perspective to the team. Everyone works together for one goal. It's a lot of fun to meet so many people from other places and schools.

Describe the most exciting moment you've ever had in softball. Being a part of district-winning teams two years in a row.

Are softball players genuinely superstitious like baseball players? Do you have superstitions?

Not as big as baseball players, but I have a couple. In the past couple of years, the night before the game I always eat chicken and potatoes. I also wear a wristband, with the initials MH on the band, in memory of a friend who lost her life while playing softball.

What other activities are you involved in at Lowell High School?

I ran cross country, I am part of Lady Arrow varsity club, International Club and also an ambassador for new students. I help kids get acclimated to their new school. I show them around (give them a tour) and explain details. My school counselors asked me if it would be something I'd be interested in and I really enjoy it.

What has surprised you so far this softball season?

Going into the season we knew we were strong, but I think we're even better than expected. We played in a tourney in Detroit and won the whole tournament.

What should our community know about the Lowell softball program?

We are working and having fun. Hard work pays off and we'd love to have Lowell fans to come watch us.

Family? Mom, dad, brothers, sisters, pets?

Mom, Jan; and dad, Dan. Sister, Abby; and brothers, Zach and Trevor, all younger. I am the oldest. I also have a dog named Roxie.

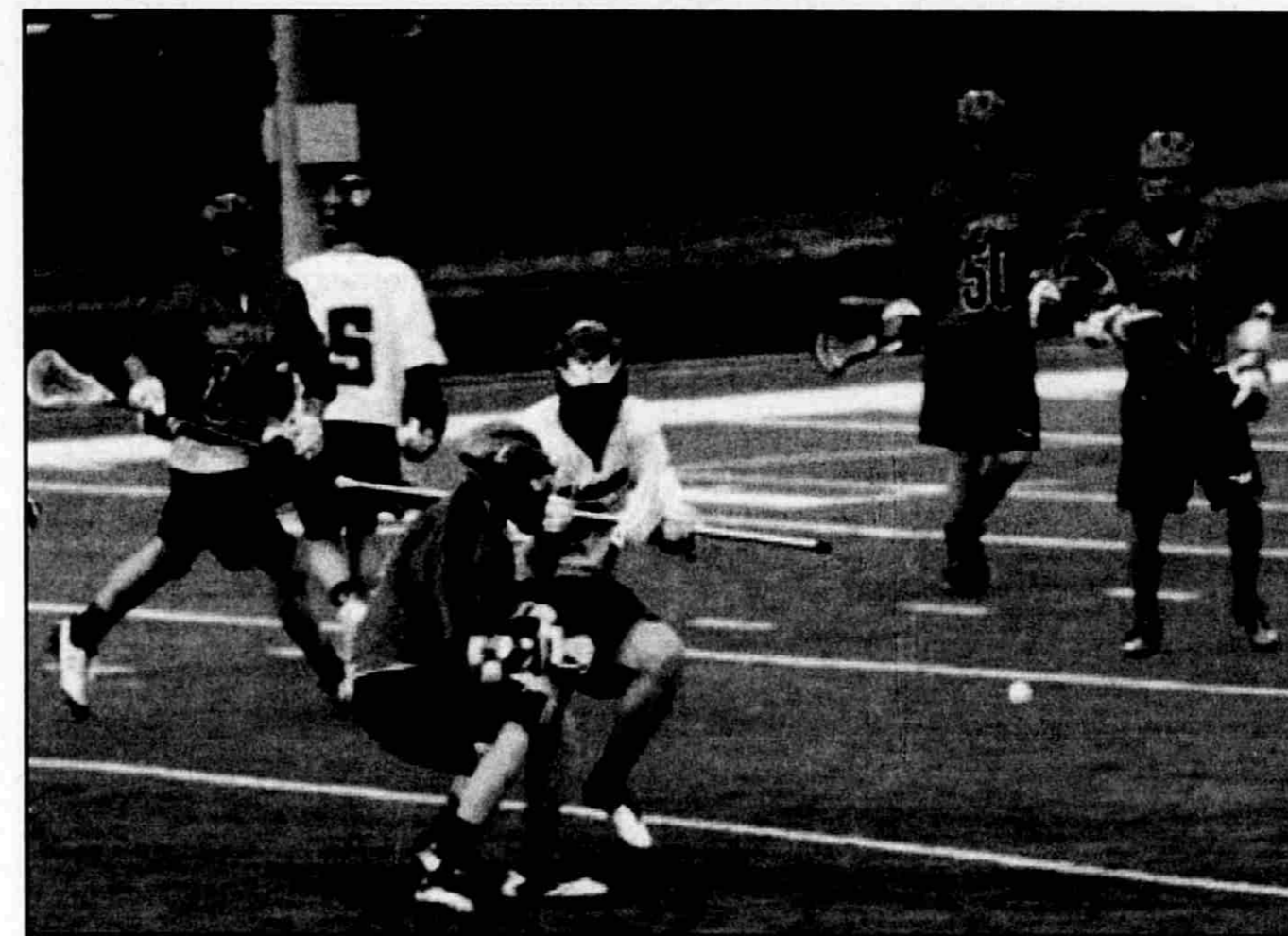
Red Arrow SPORTS

- LACROSSE

Holland Christian falls to Red Arrows in overtime

by Shane Beach

With 2.3 seconds in the fourth quarter, junior attacker Taylor Martin scored the tying goal in a thriller at Holland Christian. Three and a half minutes later, Jim Collins took a feed from Tyler Bitterman and buried the game winner. "I saw Jim cutting to the goal and he was so wide open, I knew I had to feed him," said Bitterman. The final score was 9-8. Holland Christian held on to a one-goal lead late in the game and with under two minutes to play Lowell was charged with a time-serving penalty. As bleak as it looked, coach Eric Bredin never gave up hope. "We had a guy in the penalty box at the end of the game, but I told my attackmen to be ready, that our defense would get them the ball. We have the best longpoles (defensemen) in the business and I knew this game wasn't over yet." Sure enough, with less than 30 seconds on the clock, the Red Arrow offense had possession and capitalized on their last chance to send the game into overtime. Lowell jumped to an early 5-2 lead in the second quarter, but the Maroons fought back with two scores and went into halftime down by only a goal. Three third-quarter goals put Holland Christian in the lead, 7-6. The teams traded goals in the fourth until Martin beats his man sending the game into overtime. "In 17 years of coaching lacrosse, this was one of the most thrilling games I've ever been a part of. I couldn't be prouder of my players' resilience," said Bredin. Lowell lacrosse heads into the post season with high expectations. The lacrosse team has had another marquee year with only two regular season losses in each of the past two seasons. Currently ranked 12th in the state (Division 2), strong goaltending and strong defense has led the way holding opponents to an average of 4.8 goals per game. Only five other teams in the state allow fewer. With the win over Holland Christian, Lowell improved to 8-2 on the season, 5-2 in the OK conference. The record is good enough for a third-place finish heading into the conference tournament, that will help determine the OK conference champion. Lowell hosted Grand Haven, Monday, in the first round and won 18-11 to advance to the conference semifinals. After the conference playoffs, Lowell will try to make a run in the MHSAA tournament. "I think we can make a run in the state playoffs if we get a favorable seed," said coach Bredin. "We have an outstanding team and I think we're about to peak. The past week I've seen us play some of the best lacrosse I've seen all season."



L Way to go Red Arrows!

LHS April Students of the Month

The LHS Academic Boosters and Lowell High School have announced their April Students of the Month and they are: Ciera Bowden, ninth grade; Matt Houston, 12th grade; and Sage Maliepaard, 11th grade.

In order to be eligible for this honor a student must be nominated by a department. All the nomination forms for the month are then reviewed and voted on at the monthly department chair meeting. Students are selected based on academic achievement, character and work ethic. There are 1241 students eligible for nomination, so this is quite an accomplishment for Ciera, Matt and Sage. The students receive a \$20 movie gift card and a certificate.

Bowden was nominated by the Freshman Center East and they write, "Ciera is a terrific student who works hard each and everyday.



Ciera Bowden



Matt Houston



Sage Maliepaard



Daniel Blake



Benjamin Partridge

Good grades are something Ciera has had to work hard to achieve, but she has been equal to the task this year. She comes in for extra help on a regular basis during her lunch and does everything she can to keep up on all of her assignments. She is very driven to succeed and has said on numerous occasions that she wants to attend the University of Michigan. She can be seen with a smile on her face everyday and is

kind to all who encounter her. She is always courteous and cooperative with fellow students and teachers."

Houston was nominated by the business department and they write, "Matt is by far the most hardworking and responsible student the business department has ever had the pleasure of working with. Currently Matt is the CFO for the yearbook and has been for the past two years. The attention to de-

tail and work ethic that Matt displays on a daily basis is outstanding. Replacing Matt will be a challenge, as he has set the standards for this position so high and has been such a fantastic example. Matt strives for excellence in everything that he does and is willing to go above and beyond in order to reach those standards. He is truly an outstanding student."

Maliepaard was nominated by the Freshman Cen-



William Poulias

ter West and they write, "Sage is an amazing girl. She is thoughtful, hardworking, and responsible. In addition to being a good student, she exhibits all of the character traits that we encourage at LHS. While all five can easily be seen, her strongest and most compelling trait is compassion. Sage has a powerful

Students of the Month, continued, page 14

- TRACK

Team shows progress in of spite loss to Greenville

by Shane Beach

The Yellow Jackets of week, defeating our boys Greenville stung the boys' 99-30 in a dual meet. Red Arrow track team last In spite of the loss,

coach Sara Ellis is encouraged as her young boys' track team shows progress. Coach Ellis and her coaching staff have had some injuries and are still finding out players' strengths.

"Matt Kyllonen was held out of the 400-meter because he had rolled his ankle the day before and wants to make sure it's okay for conference," stated Ellis. Even with a tender ankle, Kyllonen jumped to first place

in the high jump with a leap of 5'10".

Martin Brubaker ran the 3200-meter, for just the third time, running it and finishing with a time of 10:56 that placed him second.

Sophomore Bryce Hruskovsky is undefeated in the league, in the 110-high hurdles. Hruskovsky placed in both the 110-high hurdle and the 300-low hurdle with a 16.76 and a 45.83 respectively.

Leighton Watson took first in the long jump soaring to 19'3.5".

The boys' 4200-relay is improving at 1:36.06. Coach Ellis stated, "With some patience we could be competitive in this race at conference."

Robby Coffey continues to be strong in the pole vault, getting first with a vault of 11'6". Coach Ellis loves his progress and is expecting even bigger things from Coffey in the future.



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