



## Boden Fernsler's buzzer-beater pushes Novi past South Lyon East

SPORTS, 1B

# NORTHVILLE RECORD

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Huron Valley school board approves strategic plan

### \$361M bond proposal will appear on May ballot

Susan Bromley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

MILFORD — The Huron Valley Board of Education has approved a strategic plan that will dramatically transform Huron Valley Schools.

The unanimous vote Monday night to approve Plante Moran Realpoint's strategic plan recommendations was immediately followed by the board's agreement, 7-0, to put a \$361.3 million bond proposal on the May ballot.

Among the key findings in the company's study was that the district needs only two middle schools, rather than three as it has now. The plan calls for repurposing Oak Valley Middle School to house Harbor High School and other programs; enhancing White Lake Middle School; and constructing a new middle school on the Milford High School campus.

Based on the recommendations, it appears likely Muir Middle School will close completely, although that has not yet been finalized.

Changes to the schools will not begin until the 2025-26 school year. Redrawing of boundary lines determining which school students will attend also would take place at that time.

Superintendent Paul Salah said creating the strategic plan "has been a long process," one that has been discussed by district officials and 50-plus community members in committees since September 2022.

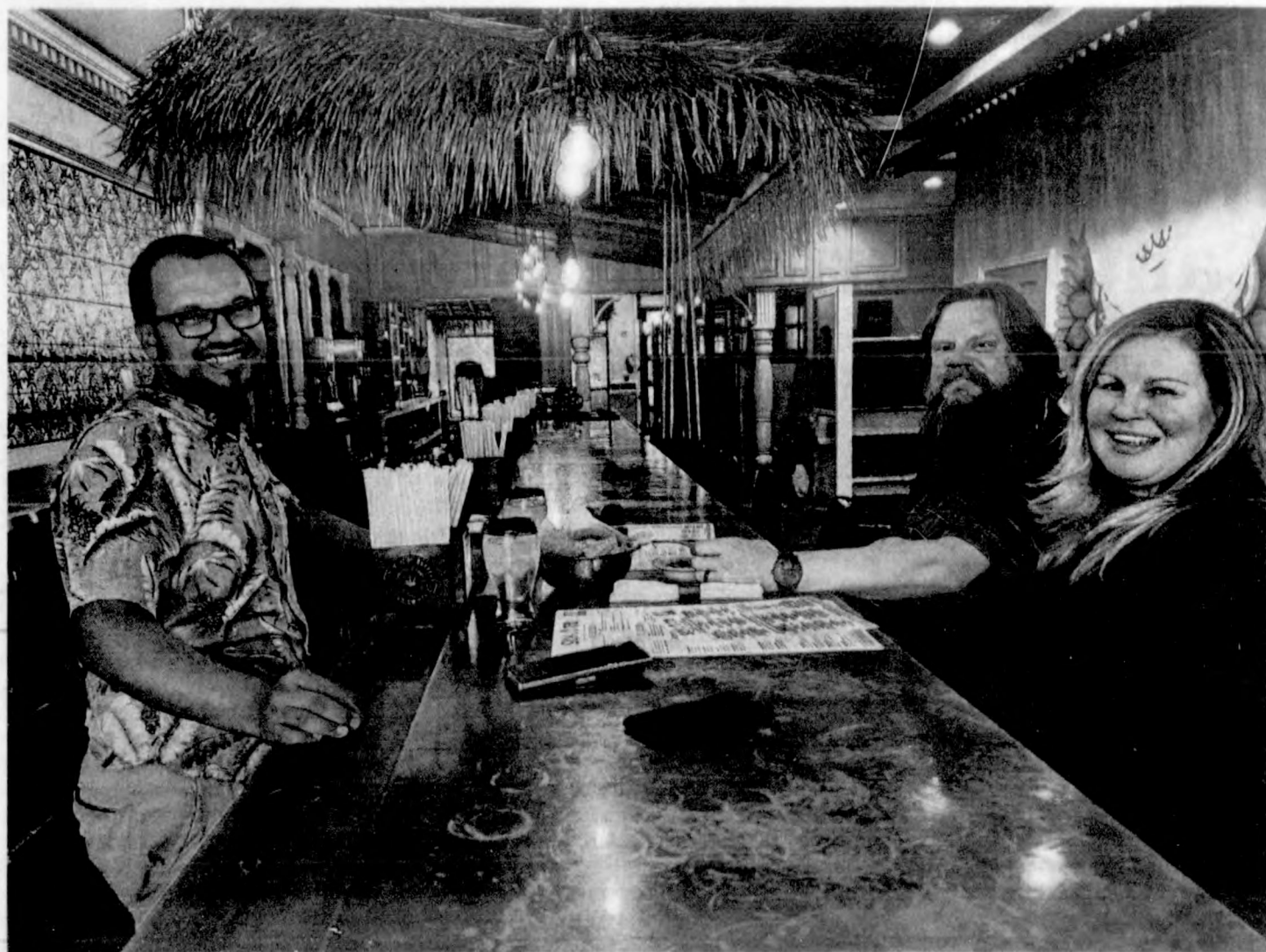
Board members expressed their support of the plan, while also acknowledging discussions have been fraught with emotions.

"For my Oak Valley mama heart, it was a hard decision," Treasurer Amy Grzymkowski said. "But at the end of the day, I have to put what is best for our kids first."

She added that the benefits of having high school and middle school students on the same campus, with shared staff between the schools and additional opportunities for the kids, outweighed her sentimentality.

Other board members agreed and also were in lockstep on putting a \$361.3 million bond proposal before voters in May 2024. The 20-year bond

See BOARD, Page 5A



Bartender Omar Chavez with Tiffany and Jordan Myers at the new Milford restaurant, Sayulita Cocina Mexicana, on Oct. 11, 2023. SUSAN BROMLEY

## South Lyon, Milford lost some favorite dining spots, but new locations are coming in 2024

Susan Bromley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The year has come to an end and so have some restaurants in South Lyon and Milford.

But many restaurants have opened as well — and 2024 promises even more dining options in the area.

Here's a look back at some of the dining spots that have closed, and what is new to enjoy in the area, as well as a look ahead to the new year.

In Milford, the closure of Palate in the summer made way for a new Mexican restaurant at 449 N. Main St. Say-

ulita Cocina Mexicana made a splash with bright, vacation vibes when it opened in October, winning rave reviews on an extensive menu.

Across the street at the corner of Main and Commerce, another Mexican-themed restaurant's doors opened — and then permanently shut within the span of eight months. **Banditos** brought buzz when it opened in February as a secluded, small plates lounge tucked inside of **Milford House**. By November, both **Banditos** and **Milford House** were closed; the latter had reopened under new owners just 15 months prior featuring an arcade.

In May, Milford got a celebrated fran-

chise breakfast restaurant when **Anna's House** opened at 780 N. Milford Road. The retro eatery that prides itself on saving you from an ordinary breakfast replaced **Hector & Jimmy's**, which had stood at that spot for 36 years before owner Jimmy Eggl shut it down in 2021.

Eggl also shut the doors at **Gravity**, another Milford restaurant, in November (he still operates **The Bar**). However, he turned the keys over to the Nicholas family, experienced restaurateurs. They plan to remodel and reopen by April with an expanded bar and craft cocktails selections, while continuing to

See DINING, Page 5A

## Novi council unites to appoint new member

Susan Bromley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

NOVI — After weeks of controversy, City Council ultimately presented a united front on Monday night in choosing a new member.

The council voted 6-0 to appoint Priya Gurumurthy to fill the seat left vacant with the election of Justin Fischer as mayor in November. Gurumurthy's term ends in 2025.

"I feel so honored, privileged and grateful," Gurumurthy, 45, said Tuesday. "From the beginning, it's always been about giving back to the community."

Gurumurthy said she did not campaign ahead of the November election for a spot on the council because she spent September in India, supporting her mother, but her ultimate goal had been to serve on council one day.

The mother of two was one of more than a dozen candidates who interviewed for the position on council, but to the chagrin of some residents and council members, she was not the woman who campaigned and received 5,614 votes in the November election: That was Sujata Raman, who was the fourth-highest vote getter who missed a seat by fewer than 300 votes.

See COUNCIL, Page 5A



Priya Gurumurthy was appointed to the Novi City Council Dec. 18, 2023. COURTESY OF PRIYA GURUMURTHY

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Ashley Milewski, assistant general manager at Canton's Crave Hot Dogs & Barbecue, shows off two of the eatery's most popular offerings.

PHOTOS BY LAURA COLVIN/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Steve Simon, co-owner of Sidecar Slider Bar and Shift Kitchen & Cocktails, poses for a photo at Sidecar's Birmingham location. COURTESY STEVE SIMON

## New restaurants opened in Plymouth and Canton during 2023 with variety of options

Laura Colvin

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

**PLYMOUTH** — New eateries opened across the area in 2023, bringing fresh options to the table for patrons.

Here's a look at some of the openings Hometown Life covered in the Plymouth and Canton areas.

### Ruckus Taco Co.

Ruckus Taco Co., a new eatery featuring fresh-made tacos, burritos, nachos and more, opened over the summer in the former Olympus Coney Island at the southeast corner of Joy and Morton-Taylor roads.

And Mexican fare isn't the only option: Ruckus Taco offers a crispy chicken sandwich, a smash burger and sides.

For owner Jeremy Kalmus, the new Canton Township location at 43315 Joy Road was the natural next step for his operation, which includes a catering business and food truck — a converted 1969 Airstream trailer — inside Corktown's Detroit Axe.

### Wing Snob

In late winter, a new location of the fast-growing Wing Snob chain opened in the also-fast-growing shopping plaza

at the northwest corner of Haggerty and Ann Arbor roads where, just across the parking lot, an Amazon Fresh store is under construction.

Hungry patrons can choose from traditional or boneless wings slathered in a choice of 15 different sauces that include honey barbecue, teriyaki, Jamaican jerk and Hot AF.

Plenty of sides are available, including street corn and sweet corn, cornbread, coleslaw and more.

### Sidecar Slider Bar and Shift Kitchen & Cocktails

Shift Kitchen & Cocktails and Sidecar Slider Bar opened under one roof in 2023 and began welcoming patrons in separate spaces at 340 N. Main St. over the summer.

The Plymouth location is Sidecar's fifth: The restaurant offers signature sliders, including several options for non-meat eaters. They have a variety of shareable appetizers, including house-smoked wings, coconut shrimp and Brussels sprouts with balsamic reduction, and bleu cheese and bacon — a popular favorite.

A variety of craft beers and cocktails help wash it all down.

On the other side of the building, Shift Kitchen & Cocktails, an upscale cocktail and wine bar with shared



Ruckus Taco features fresh-made street tacos, along with burritos, nachos and more.

COURTESY RUCKUS TACO COMPANY



A long line of customers checked out the new Scooter's drive-thru coffee shop in Plymouth on Tuesday, May 16.

plates, opened its second location.

### Crave Hotdogs & Barbecue

Crave Hot Dogs & Barbecue put out the welcome mat in early February. The new eatery at 5800 N. Sheldon Road offers fast-casual food, a self-pour beer wall, 12 televisions and two axe-throwing lanes.

The menu at Crave is focused on all-beef hot dogs, bratwurst and hot sausages — with many toppings to choose from — along with wings, pulled pork and chicken, smoked brisket, sliders, sandwiches, salads and more.

### Scooter's Coffee

The new Scooter's Coffee opened in May at the northeast corner of Ann Arbor and Sheldon roads.

The drive-thru coffee shop offers a variety of espresso drinks, smoothies and breakfast foods, like the maple waffle and everything bagel sandwich.

Customers can also choose from the egg and cheddar biscuit, a bacon burrito and or spicy sausage burrito. Pastries, muffins and other goodies are also available.

Contact reporter Laura Colvin at lcolvin@hometownlife.com.

## Why Michigan auto insurance fees are going down in 2024

JC Reindl

Detroit Free Press

USA TODAY NETWORK

A portion of Michigan drivers' auto insurance bills will be getting slightly cheaper next year.

The Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association, or MCCA, recently announced it will lower its annual per-vehicle assessments on Michigan auto insurance policies, starting July 1:

- Drivers choosing unlimited, lifetime medical coverage — known as personal injury protection, or PIP — will be charged \$90, down from \$122.

- Drivers choosing any other PIP option, including opting out of PIP coverage, will be charged a \$20 "deficit recoupment" fee, down from \$48.

The fee reductions appear to reflect a normalization of the MCCA's finances following the surprise outcome of a court case that concerned medical price controls for those suffering catastrophic injuries from auto accidents.

The Michigan Supreme Court ruled in July that the price controls in Michigan's 2019 no-fault insurance overhaul do not apply to the care of those whose injuries happened before the overhaul took effect on June 11, 2019.

The MCCA, which along with state regulators had assumed the price controls applied to everyone, acted last year to raise its fees for 2023 after the Michigan Court of Appeals made a similar ruling in the case in August 2022.

The partial overturning of the price controls meant a projected cost to the MCCA of \$3.7 billion, which when coupled with declines in the stock market and a decision to issue \$400 per-vehicle refund checks to Michigan drivers in spring 2022 — before the outcome of the court case was known — swung the MCCA from an actuarial surplus to a deficit.

To be sure, the new lower MCCA fees — running from July 1 through June 30, 2025 — won't guarantee cheaper car insurance next year. The rising cost of vehicle parts and repair work has led to significant insurance price hikes nationwide in recent years.

The MCCA is a nonprofit corporation controlled by the insurance industry that manages the catastrophic care fund. It acts as a form of reinsurance

that reimburses auto insurers once the size of an accident victim's medical bills exceeds a set threshold, currently \$635,000.

There were 15,712 accident victims who were at that threshold as of June 30. Of those individuals, 1,916 had auto policy dates after the June 2019 cutoff set by the court case and are subject to the price controls, according to the MCCA.

There was a legislative push in Lansing this fall to relax the price controls for those more recent catastrophic victims, while also boosting no-fault reimbursement rates for hospitals and medical providers treating any auto accident patient — not only the catastrophically injured.

The legislation passed the Senate but not the House.

The MCCA's latest financial report showed a \$2 billion actuarial deficit and \$21.6 billion in total assets, or down \$5.6 billion in assets since 2021. So if the MCCA were to immediately liquidate all its stocks, bonds and other holdings, the \$21.6 billion is how much money there would be.

Although the MCCA per-vehicle fees are higher since the court case, they are still lower than before the no-fault overhaul. The highest MCCA fee was \$220 in 2019.

In a news release this month, MCCA attributed the fee decline in 2024 to the medical price controls on recent accidents and a new utilization review process that also was part of the no-fault overhaul.

"We are pleased that all drivers will see a reduction in the MCCA's assessments for 2024-2025, as well as the reduction in the MCCA's estimated deficit," said Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services spokesperson Laura Hall. "As a consumer

protection agency, we continue to work to see that drivers receive the cost savings created by Michigan's auto insurance law, while ensuring continuity of care for people who were injured in auto accidents."

Runaway medical bills were a major reason why auto insurance premiums in Michigan were at various times the highest in the nation by some measures, especially in urban areas such as Detroit.

Prior to the no-fault overhaul, Michigan was the only state that required all motorists to buy unlimited, lifetime medical coverage as part of their auto insurance — and without any mandated price controls on the medical care.

The reform gave Michiganders a first-ever choice in the amount of PIP coverage to buy. Those who choose less than unlimited PIP must now fall back on their health insurance for auto accidents.

The MCCA fee was never the full cost of Michigan's no-fault system, as only a small fraction of accident claims are big enough to cross the \$635,000 threshold for switching to a catastrophic claim.

Before the overhaul, the average size of no-fault medical claims in Michigan was \$33,437 in 2017, according to a study by the National Insurance Research Council. Costs for those claims would be reflected in the price of PIP coverage.

"Michigan drivers are seeing costs go down because auto no-fault reforms are working and the latest example of this is the annual fee reduction by the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association," Erin McDonough, executive director at the Insurance Alliance of Michigan, an industry group, said in a statement Wednesday.

Contact JC Reindl: 313-378-5460 or jcreindl@freepress.com.

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### Newsroom Contacts:

Stephanie Angel, Executive Editor

Office: 517-377-101

sangel@gannett.com

Follow us on Facebook: @OEHometown

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# South Lyon graduate launches Girly Pop game to promote togetherness

**Susan Bromley**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

**SOUTH LYON** — Looking for a fun, unique, heartfelt way to connect with your daughter, mom, wife or your best girlfriends for life?

Lindsay Gray has a deal for you. The 2002 South Lyon High School grad is the creator of "Girly Pop," a new card game that, with the help of several family members, is now available on Amazon.

"It's been a little journey," said Gray, a licensed therapist who now lives in Brighton. "It's great to see the reviews starting to come in.... I think Girly Pop was a creative journey I was led to by hearing and seeing other people's pain. It's more than a game — it's a small but impactful tool in building deeper, richer, more authentic relationships with the people who matter most."

The non-competitive game created by a woman for women, will spark laughter, conversation, and maybe a few tears as friends share answers, thoughts, and comical actions, Gray suggests.

Gray explained that the 60 cards in the box are divided among three categories: "This is me," with deeper questions, "This is us," with light-hearted questions, and "This is crazy," which features activities and mini-challenges to get participants up and moving around in situations with slapstick potential.

The cards, which include prompts like "describe your perfect day," or ask questions about who has had the biggest impact on your life, and which of your friends is most likely to become a CEO, are accompanied by Gray's thoughts as a licensed therapist. The comments allow her to assist players who may have difficulty tapping into deeper emotions.

Gray, 39, had been working for a decade as a therapist when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Her idea for Girly Pop



**Lindsay Gray, a South Lyon High School graduate and licensed therapist, is the creator of Girly Pop, a new relationship-building card game.**

came from the struggles with isolation she witnessed during that time. In 2021, before a trip to Traverse City with her girlfriends, she decided "on a whim" to write down questions on 3-by-5-inch note cards to take with her.

"The first night there, we had a chill night, made dinner, got in our comfies, drank wine and dove into this game," Gray recalled. "It was magical, we played at our own pace. There was belly-laughing, tears, genuine connections and it deepened our friendship. That little set of cards was a catalyst. I thought, 'Maybe this is something others would enjoy.'"

Gray made a game geared to females, but was assisted in bringing Girly Pop to market by several men in her life, including her husband, brother and father, who helped with business aspects, marketing and design.

"After working our day jobs and putting the kids down for bed, many long nights followed, but honestly, that's the nature of our family," Gray's brother Matt Witkowski said. "We went to work



**Girly Pop is meant to spark fun and conversation.** PHOTOS COURTESY OF LINDSAY GRAY

and leveraged our strengths to get this important game to market. I am so proud of my sister. Girly Pop is all about personal growth and having fun along the way and she truly has embraced and embodied that mantra throughout this journey."

Gray is excited to have opened conversations for girls of all ages, including from her 12-year-old daughter to her 60-something mom.

"Strong female friendships are important," she said. "It's why I created the game and it's centered around that... Feeling seen and heard is validating."

Gray hopes to eventually see her game sold in boutique shops locally and may add cards in the future. For now, Girly Pop is available for \$24.99 on Amazon.

Contact Susan Bromley at sbromley@hometownlife.com or 517-281-2412.



**Gray, center, with friends Amy Kennedy and Erin Emery, with the card game Girly Pop.**

## Woman who funneled drugs in Sony PlayStation in Novi sentenced

**Dan Basso**  
Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

**DETROIT** — Federal prosecutors say the delivery of drugs in a Sony PlayStation box led agents to a "stash" location in Novi, where they made one of the largest seizures of fentanyl in the U.S. up to that time, leading to convictions of 18 people on drug charges.

Teeana White, 36, of Moreno Valley, California, became the final defendant sentenced Wednesday, Dec. 20, in federal court. She received three years, six months in prison and was ordered to forfeit a home purchased with drug money in connection with the case, U.S. Attorney Dawn Ison said in a press release Wednesday.

Prosecutors said White conspired with her boyfriend, Maurice McCoy, who previously had spent 10 years in prison on drug charges, to conceal drug money by setting up multiple businesses and controlling access to the bank accounts. Members of McCoy's drug organization deposited drug proceeds into the bank accounts and delivered hundreds of thousands of dollars in bulk cash to McCoy and White.

"Money launderers are an essential,

but often unseen, part of the drug trade. Their relative anonymity allows money launderers to profit handsomely from the drug business, while avoiding the more significant risks of drug dealing. But they help drug dealers access and enjoy the proceeds of a crime that poisons our communities," Ison said in the release.

White was charged in 2019 and was convicted by a jury on Aug. 9 on a charge of conspiracy to launder monetary instruments. She initially also had been charged by a grand jury with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, possession with intent to distribute controlled substances (aiding and abetting), and possession with intent to distribute cocaine (aiding and abetting).

After the verdict, prosecutors said, White used social media to threaten witnesses who testified at trial. Her bond was revoked, and she spent nearly four months in jail awaiting her sentence.

Of 18 defendants charged in connection with the drug operation, only White and Robin Herndon, a relative who she and McCoy used to purchase a home, went to trial. The remaining defendants, including couriers, large-scale drug customers, and McCoy himself,

pleaded guilty to various charges.

DEA and IRS agents discovered drug distribution hubs in multiple cities across the U.S., including a condominium in the 42000 block of Joyce Lane in Novi, where agents on July 10, 2017, seized \$515,000 in cash, 10 kilograms of fentanyl, more than 20 kilograms of a fentanyl/heroin mixture and 700 grams of the opioid tramadol. They also found 991 grams of cocaine in a vehicle outside the home. At the time, it was the largest fentanyl seizure in Michigan.

The seizure came after agents traced a UPC code off a Sony PlayStation box that was used to deliver heroin to a drug customer. That UPC code led to the Novi condominium where the PlayStation was in use.

In addition, in March 2017, police seized 600 grams of heroin from an unspecified location in Novi as part of the investigation.

Agents were able to identify couriers who delivered drugs, transported bulk currency or laundered money, leading to multiple arrests and additional seizures in Indianapolis and Baltimore, includ-

ing \$138,000, as well as cocaine, fentanyl and heroin from a Baltimore residence; 3 kilograms of heroin from an Indianapolis bus station; and 4 kilograms of heroin during an Illinois traffic stop.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said that prior to their arrests, McCoy and White reaped the benefits of the drug trade, using the money to fund a lavish lifestyle. McCoy purchased a Porsche Panamera and White bought a Bentley and Mercedes Benz. They used one of McCoy's relatives to try to conceal their purchase of a home worth more than half a million dollars in Southern California.

McCoy and White paid off the house in less than six months by funneling cash from drug sales through a labyrinth of bank accounts, the U.S. Attorney said. They also used the money to buy jewelry, including diamond and gold pendants for themselves, and some members of McCoy's drug organization.

White often used social media, posting pictures of her cars, jewelry, and vacations with McCoy, prosecutors said.

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION CITY OF NORTHVILLE

The City of Northville Historic District Commission (HDC) will hold a public hearing to receive public input on the proposed demolition of the existing building located at 509 Randolph St., Northville, Michigan, 48167, parcel number 48-002-02-0453-001. The property owners (Jeff and Lisa Lachapelle, 521 Randolph St., Northville, MI) are seeking HDC approval for demolition of the existing building, to allow redevelopment of the site and construction of a new building. Section 42-27 of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Guidelines for the Consideration of Applications for the Demolition or Moving of Structures within the Northville Historic District call for holding a public hearing that permits members of the public to make comments before considering demolition of a contributing resource in the district.

The public hearing will be held on January 17, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the City of Northville Municipal Building - Council Chambers, 215 W. Main Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167, 248-449-9902. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comment on the proposed demolition request.

The demolition application is available for review at the City of Northville Building Department during normal business hours of 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, local prevailing time, or on the City website [www.ci.northville.mi.us](http://www.ci.northville.mi.us)

Written comments to the HDC pertaining to the proposed demolition of the existing building must be submitted no later than 4:30 pm, January 12, 2024, to the City Clerk at the above address, or using the City Hall drop box, or emailed to [msmith@ci.northville.mi.us](mailto:msmith@ci.northville.mi.us).

MICHAEL SMITH, CITY CLERK  
CITY OF NORTHVILLE

Published: December 28, 2023

### CITY OF NOVI NOTICE OF PROVISION OF THE SNOW EMERGENCY ORDINANCE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that in accordance with Chapter 33, Article III, Division 5 of the Code of Ordinances, City of Novi, Michigan, a snow emergency shall be deemed to exist whenever: (1) freezing rain, sleet or four (4) or more inches of snow has been forecasted for the area by a newspaper circulated in the city, or by a radio or television station with a normal operating range covering the city; or (2) freezing rain or sleet has fallen or four (4) or more inches of snow have accumulated in the city.

Whenever any vehicle without an operator is found parked or left in violation of any provision of this Division, the Director of the Department of Public Works, or his designee, or the Police Department may immediately remove the vehicle or cause the vehicle to be removed to a place of safekeeping at the expense of the registered owner of the vehicle.

Failure to comply with the requirements set forth in Chapter 33, Article III, Division 5 of the Code of Ordinances, City of Novi, Michigan may also result in the prosecution for same, and liability to the extent of the penalty therein provided.

Jeffrey Herczeg  
Director of Public Works

Published: December 28, 2023

LO-0008781930 3x3

LO-0008781942 3x5

**FIND THE WORDS**

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated at right. Find the listed words in the grid. They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once. Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 16 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

- |         |         |         |          |
|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Alvey   | Clam    | Island  | Ray      |
| Angler  | Coble   | Jetty   | Rest     |
| ANSA    | Craei   | Line    | Rigs     |
| Augusta | Darwin  | Lobster | River    |
| Avoca   | Denmark | Mako    | Rods     |
| Bass    | Derby   | Moses   | Rope     |
| Bays    | Dray    | perch   | Salmon   |
| Beach   | Drag    | Koosa   | Skill    |
| Boats   | Floppy  | Oars    | Trevally |
| Bran    | Gear    | Onslow  | Tuna     |
| Bream   | Hook    | Pika    | Weipa    |
| Cairns  | Hussar  | Play    | Yamba    |
| CANOE   | Huta    | Plug    |          |

**TODAY'S ANSWER**  
The fish are biting!

**Cast a line**

C A I R N S L D E R B Y T T S  
H B E F P M A E R B I S U T Y  
H M R L O B S T E R R R N S A  
A A A U G U S T A R I A A E B  
Y Y E O H R E L B V C L N R A  
R S E K J C V D E N M A R K K  
O K N A I E R R A O O A R S U  
D I I M Y P T E N R E H R A L  
Y L L A V E R T P G W E O V I  
W L C A N O E Y Y S L I I O T  
A E R O D S P L U G E A N C K  
I R I R O P E D N A L S I A B  
B I A P O B E A C H L N O A I  
O G C L A M N N O O S A S M G  
C S F B O A T S W H U S S A R

**NEWSDAY CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS**

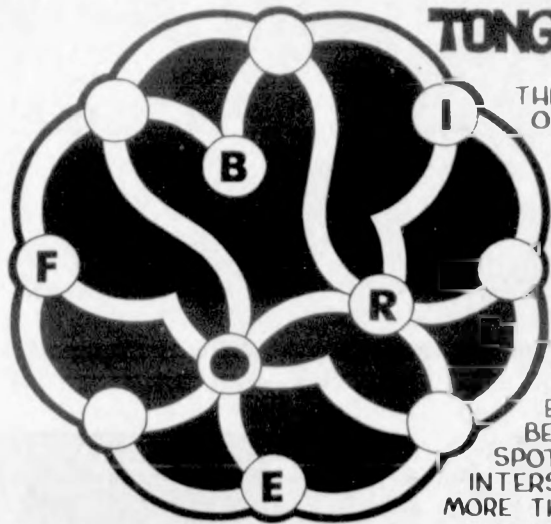
1 Late fourth-quarter flora  
15 What "I Want to Hold Your Hand" begins  
16 Common interview settings  
17 Girl with red yarn hair  
18 Cause to ride on the wrong carousel  
19 Apple core  
20 Big buyer of Wilson footballs  
22 What fills some dumpings  
23 Exhilaration exclamation  
24 Setting of the top-grossing film after *The Godfather*  
26 US Senate designation  
27 Arena arrangement  
28 They raise sunken objects  
30 "He who slings \_\_\_ loses ground": Adlai Stevenson  
31 Fighting words  
32 Antonym of "ally"  
36 Where all Kennedy Center Honors have been seen  
37 What you'd expect to be full of baloney  
38 Panasonic's home  
41 Where Olympians made burnt offerings  
42 Hugo's lifelong pal  
43 Cooper's creations  
44 Sharp sarcasm  
46 Andy Griffith played one on his sitcom  
47 Alphabetic homophone  
48 Word from the Latin for "soldiery"

**DOWN**

1 insistent encouragement  
2 Turning red, in a way  
3 Make calls  
4 Action \_\_\_  
5 Touchdown area  
6 Parade route for the 2024 Olympics  
7 Mental bloc  
8 PSAT options  
9 Fortune hunters  
10 Icon of E-tailing  
11 Where an applause meter starts  
12 Topper back in style circa 2007  
13 Mitigate  
14 What to argue about  
16 A bite to eat  
21 Sets about with a bang  
23 With more than enough material  
25 Word north of Orange on California maps  
27 Distended  
29 Private property  
30 Hub not far from SYD  
32 Current event  
33 Hereditary nobility of yore  
34 French variant of Lizzie  
35 Oil source for thousands of years  
37 Device for dishes  
38 "African unicorns"  
39 Collected  
40 *Men in Black* subordinate  
41 Sets aside  
44 Source of tones shaped like  
22 Across  
45 Sometime opposite of "stay"  
48 "America's diabolical answer to Mary Poppins"  
49 About  
52 Two-time connector  
53 \_\_\_ pool

CREATORS SYNDICATE © 2023 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 12/23/23

**PUZZLES & POSTERS**



**TONGUE TWISTER**

THIS PUZZLE CONSISTS OF TWO SEPARATE CHALLENGES:

1. SEE HOW MANY DIFFERENT WORDS YOU CAN UNSCRAMBLE WHICH CONTAIN ALL THE LETTERS AT LEFT.

2. SEE HOW MANY OF THESE WORDS YOU CAN TRACE WITH A CONTINUOUS LINE. EACH TRACING MUST BEGIN AT THE BLACK SPOT. NO PASSAGE OR INTERSECTION MAY BE USED MORE THAN ONCE PER WORD.

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2	8	3	1	7	5	4	9	6
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## Dining

Continued from Page 1A

offer steak and seafood menu options.

The Nicholas family owns several restaurants, including Smoke Street, Highland House and several Gus' Carry-out locations, including one slated to open by January in New Hudson at 30804 E. Lyon Center Drive. Gus' Carry-out offers breaded chicken, pizza, lasagna, breadsticks, salads, sandwiches and more.

The South Lyon area has seen a lot of action this year, kicking off with the long-awaited opening of **Dua Vino** at 135 E. Lake St. in downtown. The Italian restaurant and bar was three years in the making as the former RCA building was restored, with historic items uncovered during the process.

Also making a long-awaited debut in 2023 was **Mojave Cantina**, at 22870 Pontiac Trail in Lyon Township, replacing Lyon Cantina, which burned down in December 2019. The new restaurant features dishes with Tex-Mex flavor, all made fresh in-house, and includes a breakfast menu.

If it's Indian cuisine you are seeking, **Bheema's** opened at 30474 Milford Road in New Hudson in August and seemingly has it all. An extensive menu includes an array of biryani, an Indian mixed rice dish, in addition to favorites like butter and tandoori chicken.

**Saroki's Crispy Chicken and Pizza**



**Mike Skyring, owner of Men Bake Cookies, located at 56849 Grand River in New Hudson.** PHOTOS BY SUSAN BROMLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

can be found at the Shell gas station, 20777 Pontiac Trail. The franchise opened in November inside the station, offering fried chicken, pizza, subs, wraps, sandwiches and a variety of sides — made fresh to order and also available in a hot case to-go.

Sate your sweet tooth at **Men Bake Cookies**, which opened in August at 56874 Grand River Ave. in New Hudson. There you will find Mike Skyring and his jumbo gourmet treats, with flavors rotating monthly. Standards that are always available include chocolate chip and lemon meringue.

Downtown South Lyon lost a long-time business when Mary Poole closed **Lake St. Tavern** in early November, just weeks after she joined the new social district. Poole had operated the tavern at 127 E. Lake St. for 15 years, but said it was time for her and her partner, Jan



**A portrait of Karl Poulos, who rescued the tavern at 6005 Gotfredson Road in Salem Township and then operated it as Karl's Cabin, sits atop a hearth at the restaurant.**

Russell, to retire.

Also closing in South Lyon this year was Alexander's Polish American Restaurant, but that closure has a silver lining. Active Faith Community Services has purchased the building at 553 S. Lafayette St. and is raising funds to renovate it to house the nonprofit's food pantry and other programs.

Other area businesses that opened this past year:

In November, nine months after a fire devastated **Karl's Cabin** in Salem Township, the long-loved comfort food restaurant reopened at 6005 Gotfredson Road.

Prime BBQ Smokehouse opened in the spring at 1100 S. Milford Road in Highland, with fast-casual offerings including brisket, pulled pork, pulled chicken, sausage and more.

On the horizon in 2024 are a number



**Shaquille O'Neal's Big Chicken restaurant will open in Highland next spring.** COURTESY OF BIG CHICKEN

of planned restaurants or food shops:

In late March, start looking for **SOKO Social** to open at the spot of the former Kensington Grill, 30712 E. Lyon Center Drive. Hana Filipovic, SOKO owner, said the Lyon Township restaurant will be "unrecognizable," after a complete renovation.

In April, it will be a sweet beginning as Alisa Shakespeare plans to open **Total Cluster Fudge** on Main Street in Milford. She currently has a shop in Brighton.

The same month, look for **Masala Indian Grocery & Kitchen** at 588 N. Lafayette St. in South Lyon.

Also next spring, **Big Chicken** will open with the backing of basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal at 1050 Highland Road in the shopping plaza at Enterprise Drive in Highland.

[sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com)

## Council

Continued from Page 1A

Laura Casey, Matt Heintz and David Staudt were elected.

After the appointment, Raman, during public comment, said she was not a sore loser, but was angry and sad that the council had "ignored and invalidated" the voices of 5,614 voters "in favor of the votes of the six of you tonight."

Some council members and residents believed Raman should have been appointed following the Nov. 7 election, but the council instead chose to accept applications for appointment and then interview candidates.

Monday, prior to the vote, the councilmembers thanked those who interviewed, with unified remarks about how well-qualified the pool of candidates was.

Casey, the mayor pro-tem, and Fischer and Staudt all indicated they were interested in placing someone on council with experience serving on boards and commissions. Casey noted she wanted someone who could "hit the ground running."

Councilmember Brian Smith said he had thought a lot about doing the right thing.

"Where things get interesting is when you have to balance several right things," he said. "Compromise is the fundamental basis of a democratic system. Is the right thing to do appointing Raman? Yes. It's also the right thing to avoid spending \$70,000 on a special election."

Councilmembers Ericka Thomas and Heintz reiterated their belief Raman

should be appointed.

"Unfortunately, though, as much as I truly believe I am right about this, I have had the opportunity to vote on it and I lost," she said, glancing to her left at her fellow board members before adding, "We've already had the vote. I already lost that vote. And the interview process has already been decided. Therefore, I have to work within that process to allow our city to move forward."

Gurumurthy, a global IT director for Yanfeng International, moved to the U.S. from India in 2000 as she pursued a master's degree in computer science at the University of Texas at Dallas. After getting married in 2001, she relocated to Holland, Michigan, later serving on boards for the Tulip Time Festival and Herrick District Library Board.

In 2018, she became a U.S. citizen and moved the following year to Novi. Since 2021, she has served on the board for Novi Youth Assistance and last year, she began serving as a trustee on the Novi Library Board.

Now that she has been appointed to a seat, she has set goals of optimizing road closures to reduce impacts on residents; expanding affordable housing; creating a senior-friendly community; cultivating environmental leadership and climate sustainability; and promoting girls and STEM.

"I want to put my full energy in, learn, do a deep dive and give my best," she said. "I want to work together to move our city to the next level with our goals. Together, we can work and make things happen."

Contact **Susan Bromley** at [sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com) or at 517-281-2412.

## Board

Continued from Page 1A

won't require a tax increase because other debt will fall off the tax rolls.

Salah noted the biggest question officials have been receiving was about why the district was putting the question before voters on the May ballot, particularly when bonds wouldn't be sold until 2026.

He explained that the district's buildings comprise 1.7 million square feet and it takes months for design work. Replacing exterior doors and windows throughout the district for

safety and security is a massive project, considering that Milford High School alone has more than 100 exterior doors.

Additionally, Salah said enhancements to White Lake Middle School would utilize money from a previous bond and the scope of the work will change if the new bond is approved.

"This (bond) gives us the opportunity to continue to improve our facilities to provide the tools for our teachers to provide the opportunities for our kids as it relates to innovative programming," School Board President Tom Wiseman said.

Contact **Susan Bromley** at [sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com) or at 517-281-2412.

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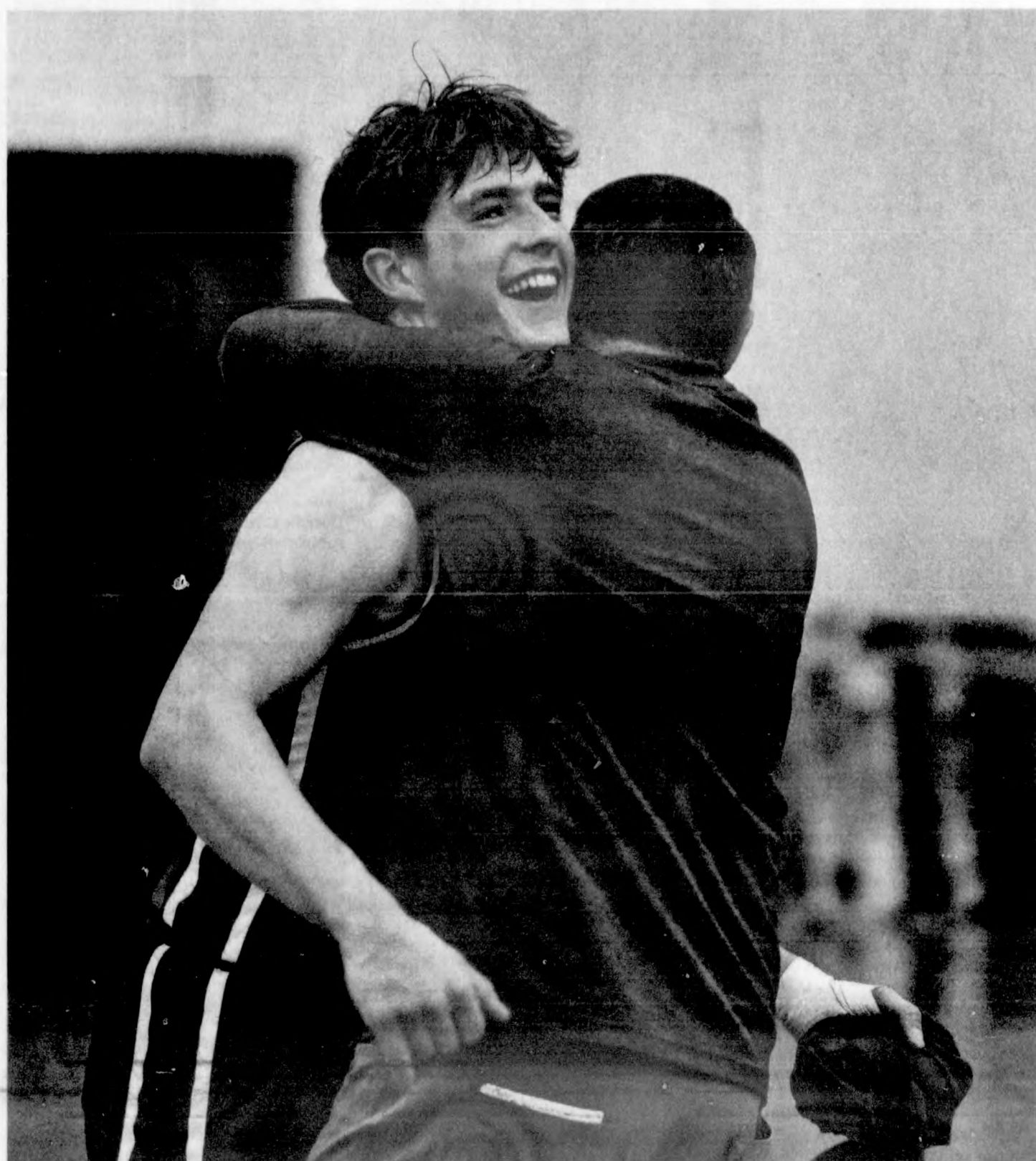
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# SPORTS



Novi coach Chris Housey hugs Boden Fernsler following a boys basketball game Dec. 19, 2023, at South Lyon East. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE

## Boden Fernsler's buzzer-beater pushes Novi past South Lyon East

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

It was a giant bear hug three years in the making. Out of a timeout with 31.4 seconds left, the Novi boys basketball team inbounded the ball, dribbled it up the floor and started eating away at the clock to set up one final shot in an attempt to

snap a 49-49 tie against South Lyon East. At the top of the key, Boden Fernsler set a screen for guard Brendan Lynch, who dribbled into the paint, sucked in two defenders and then whipped a pass back to a wide-open Fernsler at the 3-point line. The senior buried the open shot mere moments before the final buzzer sounded.

And then the Wildcats (4-2) rushed the floor to mob Fernsler to celebrate the 52-49 nailbiting victory. After shaking hands with the Cougars, coach Chris Housey raced over to the southeast set of bleachers, and then he wrapped both of his arms around Fernsler and gave his captain a tight squeeze. See **NOVI**, Page 4B

### GIRLS BASKETBALL

## KLAA title contender Canton isn't happy winning close

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Judging by the effort the Canton girls basketball team showed during its KLAA/OAA Challenge matchup at Bloomfield Hills, it's safe to say the Chiefs should be a contender to win the Kensington Lakes Activities Association-West this season.

In a gritty, scrappy 43-39 victory over the Black Hawks on Dec. 15, Canton (4-0) made defensive adjustments on the fly to slow down Bloomfield Hills' dominant post play, found ways to get to the basket and score against a 3-2 zone defense and went 6 of 8 from the foul line in the waning moments.

It's the stuff championship teams are made of. Yet, one by one, as the Chiefs exited the locker room following the win, there were far more scowls than smiles.

Rallying the troops and winning close on the road in a showcase game just wasn't good enough for them. That wasn't their best basketball they displayed, and they appeared upset with themselves.

Look out, KLAA. Canton is here to dominate.

"Tonight, we didn't play our best game, but we won, and that's going to be the motto for this year: We've just got to pull out games," said Justice Tramble, a South Carolina State commit who scored a game-high 20 points.

See **CANTON**, Page 3B



Canton's Justice Trambles attacks the basket during a KLAA/OAA Challenge girls basketball game on Friday, Dec. 15, 2023, at Bloomfield Hills. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE

## Brother Rice football hires Southfield A&T's Aaron Marshall



Southfield A&T head coach Aaron Marshall celebrates a 36-32 win over Belleville at the Division 1 state final at Ford Field in Detroit on Nov. 26, 2023. JUNFU HAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Jared Ramsey  
Detroit Free Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Aaron Marshall, the 2023 Michigan Division 1 High School Football Coach of the Year fresh off winning a state championship with Southfield A&T, will be on Birmingham Brother Rice's sidelines next season. Brother Rice announced Wednesday that Marshall will take over as the school's next head coach. Marshall spent 11 seasons on the Southfield A&T, with the last three as head coach. "I see an opportunity to build on the

rich tradition at Brother Rice and continue the legacy that has touched me and my family. I really appreciate this chance to be a part of something special," said Marshall. "I promise the Brother Rice community that we will be the hardest working team in the off-season, anywhere. We are going to get to work right away in the new year and we will make you proud." In his final season with Southfield A&T, Marshall led the program to its first-ever state title, taking down two-time reigning Division 1 champions, Belleville. The team was led by Isaiah Marshall, Aaron's nephew and a Kansas

commit, who had 415 total yards and three touchdowns — including the game-winner — for the stunning 36-32 victory in the state championship. Now, he will be tasked with trying to accomplish the same feat for Brother Rice for the first time since the school three-peated as Division 2 state champions from 2011-13. Marshall attended Brother Rice for half of his high school experience before moving to Chicago and attending Mount Carmel, a private Catholic powerhouse in South Chicago. See **MARSHALL**, Page 2B

Get More Sports

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# Confidence is key for Devin Lee, one of Detroit CC's top returners

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

With the game well in hand in the waning moments of Saturday's second annual Rocket Hoop Classic boys basketball game at Westland John Glenn, Devin Lee received a pass in transition, squared up with the basket and went up strong from the left block for a tough two points.

"That's how we finish, man," first-year Detroit Catholic Central coach Tory Jackson yelled to his players as the final seconds ticked off the scoreboard during the eventual 54-41 victory. "THAT is how we finish."

There's a good reason why Jackson, the former Notre Dame star and two-time Michigan Class C Player of the Year at Saginaw Buena Vista in the early 2000s, was emphasizing finishing strong.

One night earlier, the Shamrocks (3-2) were unable to do just that in their Catholic League-Central opener against Warren DeLaSalle, which snuck out of Novi with a 54-53 win.

CC carried a 41-28 lead over John Glenn into the fourth quarter, but the Rockets went on a 10-1 run.

Instead of faltering, the Shamrocks hung in there and didn't let John Glenn get closer than four points from knotting the score. It was the usual suspects doing the heavy lifting — from TJ Nadeau, the team's top returner, burying a 3-pointer to halt John Glenn's run and making a free throw to extend CC's lead to Uchenna Amene, one of the best point guards in the entire CHSL, hitting crucial free throws down the stretch.

But also playing well in crunch time was Lee, a junior who is quickly learning what it takes to go from being a role player a year ago to becoming one of the key guys on the team.

Lee totaled six of CC's 13 points in the fourth, including that tough basket in transition that had Jackson smiling as John Glenn athletic director Jason Malloy presented the Shamrocks with a trophy for winning the showcase game.

"He got it going for us in the second half, and he played huge for us," Jackson said of the 17 points Lee chipped in to go along with Nadeau's game-high 20. "I'm so proud of that kid. He's one of the best two-way players in the state. He's just got to believe it."

Lee and his older brother, DJ, transferred to CC from Bloomfield Hills before the start of the 2022-23 school year.

As a Black Hawk, DJ was almost unguardable in the Oakland Activities Association, even helping Bloomfield Hills win back-to-back White division titles because no opponents could stop his ability to throw down dunks, nor could they halt the hot shooting of teammate Noah Adamczyk, who now plays at Central Michigan University.

DJ has since graduated and is doing post-grad work at IMG Academy in Florida.

But it's safe to say the apple didn't fall far from the tree when it comes to Devin.

While the brothers play completely different styles, with DJ being more of a



Detroit Catholic Central's Devin Lee scores down low during the second annual Rocket Hoop Classic on Dec. 16, 2023. PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE



Detroit Catholic Central's Uchenna Amene drives.

traditional forward and Devin having the ballhandling skills of a point guard but also the wherewithal to score in the paint, both have been a boon for the Shamrocks, despite CC posting an 11-11 record the one year the duo got to play alongside each other.

But Devin is back, and the Shamrocks look much improved.

The biggest adjustment, though? He's being asked to be one of the main guys. They're going to rely on his defense, rebounding, ability to knock down shots and toughness to drive to the hoop.

While he started some games a year ago, he wasn't asked to be as pivotal of a player as Nadeau, Amene or even DJ. So taking that next step and being one of the go-to players has been an eye-opener.

"It's been a big change from last year," the 6-foot-3, 180-pound small forward said. "Last year was a good experience, playing tough competition like Brother Rice and St. Mary's and all of those top players. It felt good. But now I'm just trying to get to my spots, just trying to feel comfortable and just be confident and be me."

"Like Coach says, 'Don't overthink, just do it,' and that's what I'm trying to do."

Devin has certainly put in the work to be in the position he's in right now.

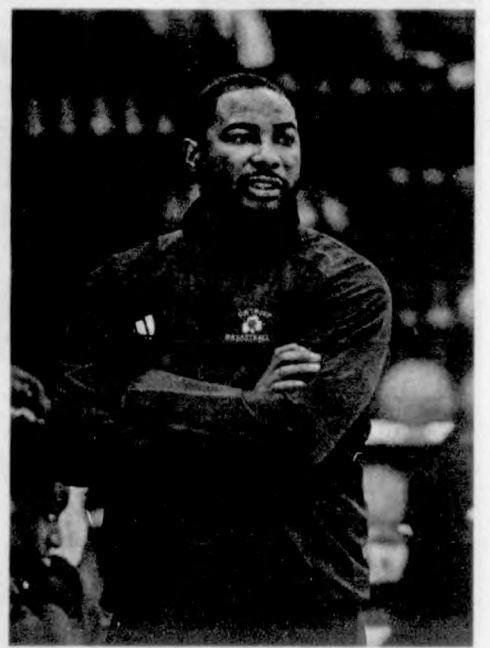
Jackson said Devin is one of his hardest workers, someone who showed up to offseason workouts and shootarounds as soon as Jackson was hired in May to replace former coach Brandon Sinawi.

Jackson also said Devin is one of the guys he's had — alongside the likes of Nadeau, Amene and Asher Suardini, the team's returning sophomore guard — who "lived in the gym" all summer.

So what's the ceiling for Devin? "I think he can be an All-Catholic, all-state kind of guy," Jackson said. "I really do. By the time he leaves here, he should be first-team All-Catholic and a first-team or second-team all-state type of



Detroit Catholic Central's TJ Nadeau shoots a free throw.



Detroit Catholic Central coach Tory Jackson watches his team.

guy. His ability to make shots on the perimeter, play inside and make shots off the bounce, he can do it.

"We've just got to get him to continue to believe."

That's the biggest thing both Devin and Jackson said the junior needs to improve: His confidence.

But that should come, especially with how well he played down the stretch against John Glenn.

Competing in the CHSL-Central, arguably the best conference in Michigan, Devin is going to get tested nightly. With each game, more confidence should come.

Right now, they're still working with him on finding it.

"We're just getting him more confident," Jackson added. "We have to remind him sometimes now that, bro, you've got the game, just believe in yourself. So that's what it's been about, just challenging him and pushing him to another level. When he forgets at times,

like, yo, we've just got to give him a little bit of a kick in the butt."

Butt kicking is what Jackson is known for as a coach.

He prides his teams on not turning over the ball. When they do, there's a price to pay in practice the next day.

CC probably deserved a butt-kicking for not closing out the game against the Pilots on Friday night, but the Shamrocks proved they are, indeed, capable of holding on late against a talented and deep John Glenn squad.

And making sure it happened down the stretch was Devin.

"We've learned from our last two losses, finishing the game strong at the end," Jackson said. "Guys are catching and facing, and Devin was the one to finish it with a layup at the end for us tonight."

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsom-brandonj.

## Playing for PHS gave Idrys Cotton confidence he could play in Big Ten

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Plymouth football team was in a tough spot halfway through the 2021 season.

Homecoming night was arriving, and the Wildcats were missing several linemen because of injuries.

They had no choice but to pick over the JV roster to fill those positions.

One of the underclassmen who received a promotion was Idrys Cotton, who was primarily an offensive lineman without much experience playing defense. But Plymouth had no other options. The team needed him to play on defense. It needed his size in the trenches.

And he excelled. On the opening drive alone against Hartland, the then-sophomore had three solo tackles. And then he went on to finish the game with several more eye-opening plays that Plymouth's coaching staff didn't expect to see.



Plymouth senior Idrys Cotton signed with Northwestern for football during a national signing day ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, at the high school. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE

That, right there, was the moment it all clicked for Cotton. One stellar performance is what it took to give him the confidence he needed to start taking the sport more seriously.

"Seeing other people do it, I asked myself why can't I do it?" Cotton said. "If

I wanted to do it, I knew I could put my mind to it and do it myself. Toward the end of sophomore year, that's when I realized I could really play college football if I took this seriously enough, took care of my body right and lifted weights. Doing that has taken me a long way and changed my life forever."

It certainly has.

On Wednesday, the three-star senior and recent first-team selection on Hometown Life's All-Area football team made it official by signing his letter of intent to play on the offensive line for Northwestern University.

As a 6-foot-4, 290-pound tackle, he had almost 30 scholarship offers to choose from. From Northwestern and Indiana in the Big Ten to Duke and the ACC, Vanderbilt in the SEC and even Deion Sanders' Colorado.

That's a hat tip to the development and hard work Cotton has endured since that Hartland game.

"I met with him as a sophomore

See COTTON, Page 4B

## Marshall

Continued from Page 1B

From there, he went on to play quarterback at Youngstown State and spent three years in the Arena Football League. After his playing career was over, he returned home to Detroit and began his coaching career. He spent 2011-12 as the head coach of Detroit Northwestern before joining Southfield A&T.

"This is an important moment in the history of Brother Rice and the athletic department," Brother Rice Athletic Director Jeff Calcaterra said in a statement. "Coach Aaron Marshall's leadership, his understanding of Brother Rice, our values as an institution, our commitment to academic excellence, and demonstrated ability to build and lead a quality and highly respected program set him apart throughout the search process."

"His respect for the past, vision for the future and enthusiasm for the present will serve our student-athletes and school community moving forward. We look forward to welcoming Aaron Marshall, his wife Lynnea and children Lia, Peyton and Aaron Jr. to our Warrior family."



# Canton

Continued from Page 1B

"We're not always going to play the best, but we expect to win games, and that's what we should be doing."

With Canton's roster, this is its best chance in a while to compete for a league title.

The Chiefs were predicted to finish third in the KLAA-West behind only Salem and Howell in the pre-season coaches poll. But so what? Last year, the coaches predicted the Rocks to finish fifth in the division, and they wound up winning the league championship and earning a trip to the Breslin Center.

Leading the charge for Canton is Tramble, who is arguably one of the best players in the West.

The 6-foot-1 senior is tough to defend because she has the strength and power to be a traditional post player, but then she will surprise you with her skills as a ballhandler. It's not uncommon for her to bring the ball up the floor and then immediately slip into the post. She can drive to the hoop and draw fouls, something she did against the Black Hawks to ultimately force two Bloomfield Hills players to foul out, plus she can knock down long-range jumpers.

She almost singlehandedly helped the Chiefs win Friday night, as she took over the fourth quarter. Between her shooting from the foul line and drives to the basket, she was unguardable. She snapped a late 39-39 tie by hitting a free throw and then making a move on the left block for a basket to secure the victory.

She scored every point Canton tallied in the fourth quarter except for a free throw by Ava Murphy in the final seconds.

Tramble's skill set looks even better when you pair her with Marisa Cribari, a senior shooting guard whose heady play on defense often kickstarts the Chiefs' transition offense. What's more, she's just as strong as Tramble, too. She can battle for rebounds with the best of them. She chipped in 11 points.

Another key returner this winter is Maya Joiner, a senior small forward.

"We definitely have high hopes for this year, we've got big goals," Canton coach Kayla Bridges said. "I've got all the confidence in the world in that team and those kids like Justice, Marisa, Maya



Canton coach Kayla Bridges smiles before a KLAA/OAA Challenge girls basketball game on Friday, Dec. 15, 2023, at Bloomfield Hills High School. PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE

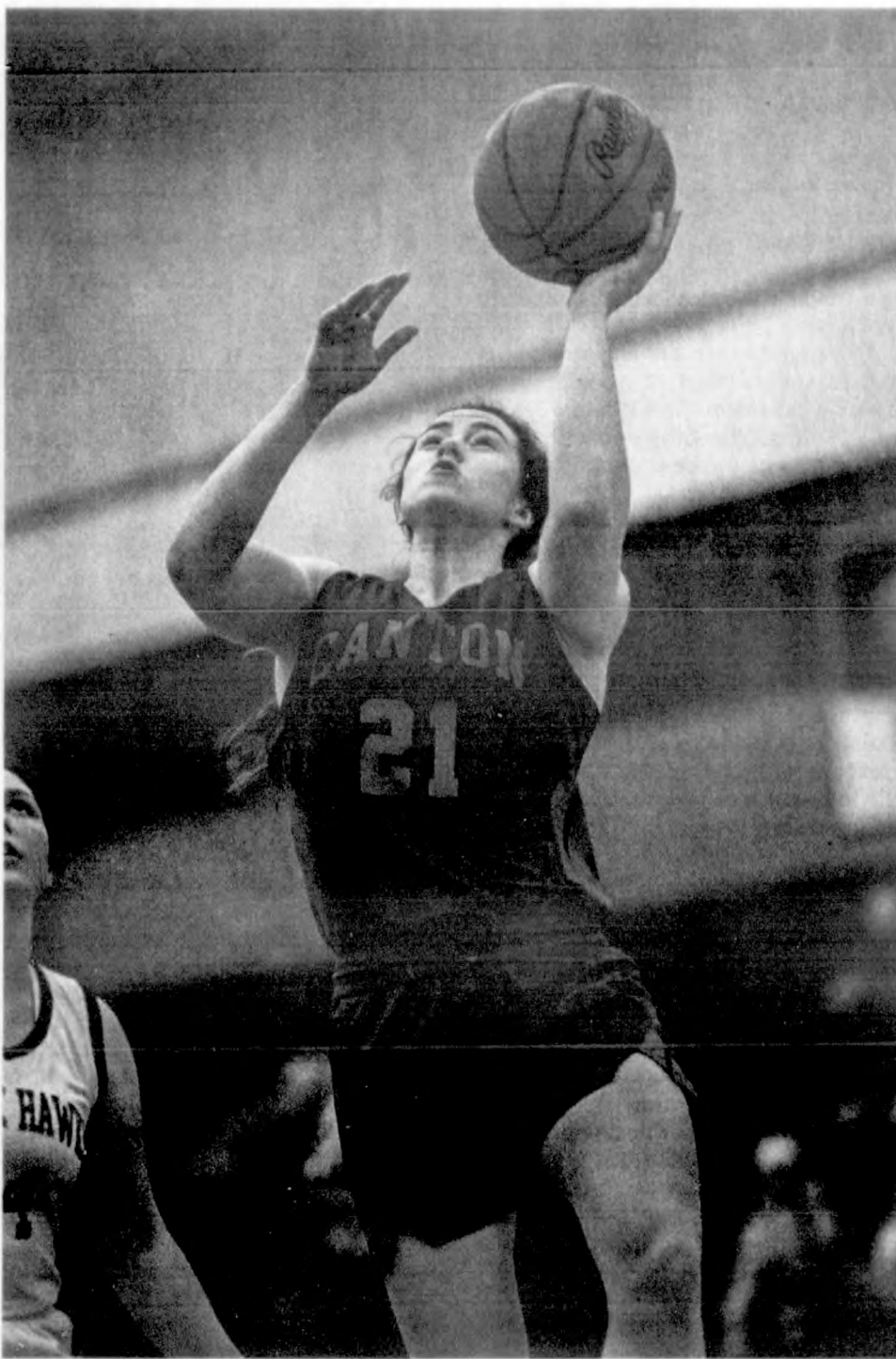
and even Ava. I've had them for a couple of years now. They're pretty comfortable around me, and they know what I want and expect. So it's been really good to see. It makes my job a lot less stressful having those girls here, that's for sure."

Outside of the first three quarters against Bloomfield Hills, Canton has looked dominant in each game, winning big against Chandler Park and Detroit UPrep and earning a respectable 10-point victory over KLAA-East foe Dearborn Fordson.

Bridges is hoping all of these non-conference battles prepare Canton for what should be a competitive, fun conference race to come over the next two months:

"We wanted to pick a good variety of teams to get us ready for league play and see different styles of play," the fourth-year coach said. "But it definitely hasn't been easy. It's been pretty glaring seeing the things we've got to get better and work on, but that's what those types of games are for. It's great to be 4-0, but the biggest thing is we've got to learn from them, see where we need to get better at and make them our strong points so we can enter league play playing our best basketball."

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsom-brandonj.



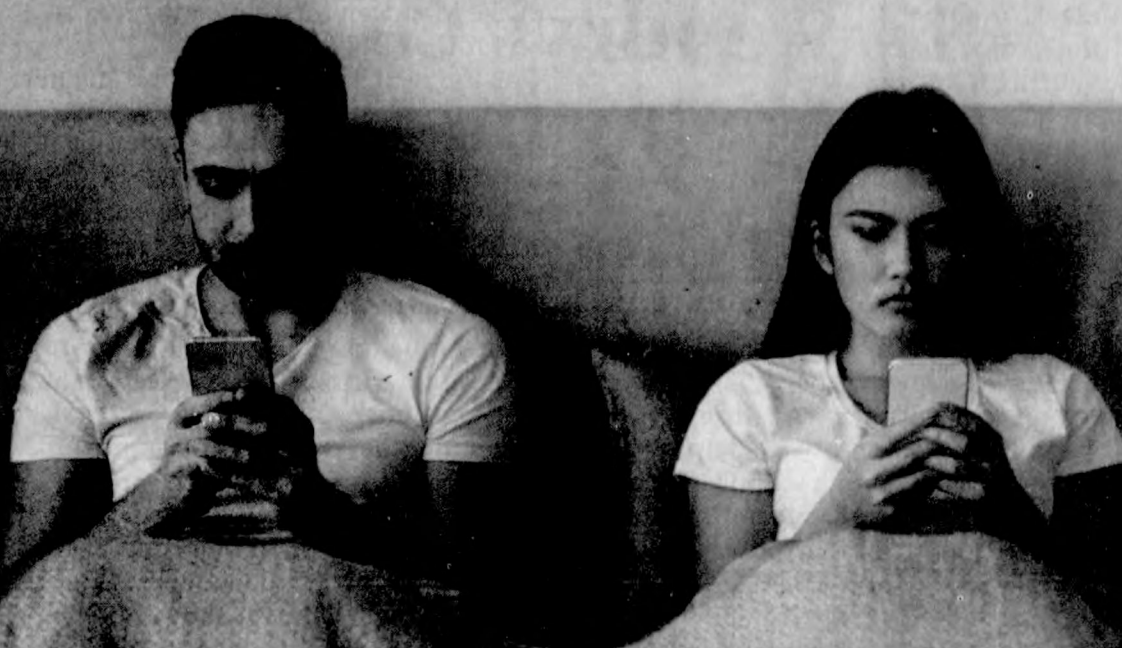
Canton's Marisa Cribari scores in transition.

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Kayla Bridges Canton girls basketball coach

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## Novi

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It was well-warranted. The Wildcats just did something Fernsler's senior class couldn't do back in 2021-22. They rebounded from a small deficit, knotted the score late and then made the game-winning shot to steal a win on the road.

This time three years ago? East beat Novi 62-59 in overtime, which went down as the start of an 11-game losing streak for the Wildcats — and one of the toughest times in the program's recent history.

But that heartache has since turned into an invaluable experience for Fernsler and his buddies. Not only in basketball but in all the sports that they play together.

Last spring, his baseball team won just its second state championship ever, despite entering the playoffs as an underdog, one no one outside of Novi's city limits gave a chance to beat rival Northville in the regional tournament.

This past fall, he helped the football team win seven games in a single season for the first time since 2008, which included gutting out several second-half comebacks and even beating Plymouth with just five seconds left.

Winning in crunch time has become something the seniors just do at Novi.

"They've been through that state championship experience," Housey said. "Boden could have rushed that (game-winner), and he could have done a million things differently, but he's been there before. So it starts with them (the senior class). They've been three-year varsity players for us. They've been there through the dark times, and we've gutted it out. They've learned along the



Novi's Brendan Lynch passes during a boys basketball game on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, at South Lyon East. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE

way."

Added Fernsler: "It definitely does because in the past, with basketball, I kind of got frazzled in those moments and turned the ball over and stuff like that. But it's senior year, and I've got a lot of experience in all three sports, so I've definitely settled down this year more, and it's something I'm used to now."

Housey knew East would crowd the paint and attempt to double-team Lynch on any dribble drives. And he also knew that would leave a quality shooter such as Fernsler, who totaled 14 points, open to make his second 3 of the night.

His previous make from long range? That one put Novi ahead, 47-46, while Chase LeFevre, who led Novi with 15 points, threw in a put-back attempt to make it a three-point lead with 1:03 re-

maining.

Both of those field goals were huge because East senior Cameron Crosby hit a step-back 3 shortly afterward to knot the score just before the Wildcats got that final chance to win it all.

"You know what's funny? That's exactly the play we drew up," Housey said. "We wanted to make sure we took the last shot. We had kind of read how they were playing our side-ball screens from earlier, and we knew if we put those two, Brendan and Boden, in a pick-and-roll that they'd make the right play. And they did."

"Brendan drew a double team and kicked it over to Boden and he knocked it down."

It wasn't an easy pass for Lynch to make, though.

He had to race to the right block and

then fling a pass over the outstretched arms of 6-foot-4 Crosby, who led the Cougars with a game-high 25 points.

"Brendan came off that screen pretty hard, and they were gravitating to him pretty hard because he had been doing stuff all game long," said Fernsler, a Lafayette College baseball commit. "He knew I was out there, and I knew I had space, so it was a great pass by him."

Lynch finished with 11 points. Thad Lawler, another team captain who is part of the baseball and football teams, chipped in six, while Trey Tesorero had four and Zack Knoll and Aaron Lauer had two apiece.

But how big of a win this was for Novi can't be overstated.

The Wildcats have done similar things in baseball and football. But they hadn't excelled in crunch time on the hardwood quite like they did against East on Tuesday night.

With the Kensington Lakes Activities Association-West season starting later this week against Plymouth, Novi knows that every night is going to be a battle, much like it was against the Cougars.

Now they've proven they can win late when everything is on the line. If they can do it against the likes of Canton, Salem and Northville, expect to see even more hugs out of Housey.

"That's how the West is every single night, so this is good prep for us," the sixth-year coach said. "They're (East) tough, they're physical. They run the floor so well. It took a lot out of us to stay in the game and fight, but we did. And I think if we can do that against these guys, it's good preparation for the league schedule coming up."

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsom-brandonj.

## Cotton

Continued from Page 2B

going into his junior year," Plymouth coach Greg Souldourian recalled. "I said, 'Listen, right now, you're a MAC (Mid-American Conference) kid just on size alone. If you put in the work, who knows what will happen from here.' He did put in the work, and he was a good student."

With the Wildcats, he worked extra with offensive line coaches Derek Hoffman and Jim Baker as well as offensive coordinator Nick Troher.

Away from the program, he signed up for Rising Stars Academy and worked with coach Reggie Wynns. The more he improved, the more recruiting showcases he showed up to, and the more attention he received from colleges.

It's no surprise why he wrapped up his career at Plymouth as a Michigan High School Football Coaches Association first-team all-state and Dream Team selection. He was a big reason why running

back Jaxon McCaig had over 1,700 yards of total offense and recorded 22 touchdowns this past fall, which also included McCaig breaking the school record for most rushing yards in a single game (327 yards).

"(Training with Plymouth's coaches) helped a lot and especially training by myself with Rising Stars and Coach Reggie Wynns and all of them," Cotton said. "That really shaped me into a versatile offensive lineman that can do a lot of different positions."

Added Souldourian: "He didn't really play a lot of defense. He was more of an offensive player. But we started him on defense (as a sophomore) because that's where we needed him. He balled out. He had a pretty darn good game. To us, right then and there, we knew he'd be pretty good if he put in the work. We knew he just had to commit to it, and we'd see where it'd take him from there."

And where it's taking him right now is Evanston, Illinois, a place where Cotton expects to continue to work to see just how far he can go in this sport.



Plymouth senior Idris Cotton signed with Northwestern for football during a national signing day ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, at the high school. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWN LIFE

## Obituaries

### Robert Eugene Dwyer

HASTINGS - 6/14/1935 thru 12/10/2023

Robert Eugene Dwyer of Hastings, MI died peacefully at home the morning of Sunday, December 10th, hand in hand with his wife of 47 years. Bob was born on June 14, 1935, in Waukegan, IL to Donal Dwyer II and Carol Barnes. The family moved to Detroit when he was five years old, eventually settling in Livonia, MI.

Bob married Marilyn James in 1956 with whom he raised his daughter, Linda Dwyer. His young family made their home in Plymouth, MI where Marilyn taught art and Bob first ran a pizza shop, Pizza Pete's, and later for many years served as branch manager of the Plymouth Secretary of State's office.

Bob was a keen student of history and a passionate believer in American constitutional democracy. His dedication to being an active citizen was the dominant theme in his life, along with his dedication to his family. Bob began his lifelong political involvement while still in high school at Livonia Bentley High School. Through his involvement with the Democratic Party, he worked closely with some of Michigan's most illustrious Democratic figures of the 1950s and 1960s, including first serving as a driver for U.S. Senator Pat McNamara, working with and for Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams, and a close and enduring friendship with former Governor and Michigan Supreme Court Justice John Swainson. While a resident of Plymouth, Bob was elected Democratic Party Chairman of Michigan's 2nd Congressional District, served as a Michigan Democratic State Central Committee member, and in 1968 led a successful open housing referendum to desegregate housing in Plymouth. Bob served as a delegate to the 1968 Democratic Party Convention in Chicago, an experience he treasured sharing with his wife and young daughter who accompanied him.

In the 1970s, Bob spent several years as editor of a small daily newspaper in Ann Arbor where he interviewed a young city council member then running for reelection. Carol Jones received the paper's enthusiastic endorsement and, two years later, Bob's marriage proposal. They were married January



8, 1977 and would enjoy another 47 years of companionship together. He persuaded her to return to law school at the University of Michigan, but not before also persuading her to join him in running a hotel on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan for a time, carrying an abiding love of Beaver Island with him for the rest of his life.

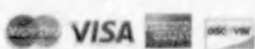
For the next 15 years, Bob and his new bride immersed themselves in government and politics, traveling extensively in every Michigan county in their Fiat Spider convertible, expanding their knowledge and appreciation of this great state. Bob moved to Barry County in 1985 and a few years later, at the age of 58, started a new chapter of life following the birth of his second child, Maeve. Of all his careers - pizza chef, car salesman, Secretary of State Branch Manager, commercial real estate, newspaper editor, harness racing rules enforcer for the Michigan Racing Commission, campaign manager - stay-at-home father was by far his favorite. All of Bob's many coffee shop conversation partners over the years know how he much adored his children.

A proud husband, father, Democrat, feminist, avid reader, and active thinker, Bob never missed an opportunity to encourage people, especially young people, to a life of activism and involvement in what he viewed as the responsibility of being a participant in our democracy. A great believer in the inevitability of gradualism and the power of people to effect change, he was never discouraged with the slow and halting pace of change. He enjoyed boating the Great Lakes, attending daughter Linda's many theatrical performances, cooking, chatting and debating with friends, spending time with his family, and providing a lap for the family pets.

Bob was preceded in death by his parents Donal and Carol (Barnes) Dwyer, brother Donal Dwyer III, former wife Marilyn (James) Rummler, and beloved parents-in-law Ruth and Larry Jones. He is survived by his wife, Carol Jones Dwyer, and children, Linda Dwyer (Joseph) of Fort Wayne, IN and Maeve Dwyer (Caitlin) of Tacoma, WA. A celebration of life, in the spirit of an Irish Wake, is contemplated in January. His family was supported by and expresses our gratitude to Elara Hospice and to home caregivers Ross Brown and Rebecca Brown for easing his final days and making it possible for him to spend them at home. Donations in Bob's honor can be made to the Barry County Democratic Party.

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## Keys to successfully applying for jobs: And what to expect next

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A job application presents a great opportunity to make a strong first impression with a prospective employer.

Job applications have changed as the utilization of technology has increased. Today the majority of employers advertise jobs online and conduct much of the initial search process through digital channels. According to Indeed, companies typically direct applicants to fill out a digital application through a specific website. Unlike a résumé, the job application is a legally defensible document. The information contained on it should be as thorough and accurate as possible. Some additional strategies can help applicants successfully apply for jobs.

- Read over the application carefully. Understand what is expected of you as an applicant. Carefully read the instructions on the application and any other supporting documents or information the employer may be requesting. Applicants should not miss out on a job opportunity due to a failure to follow directions.

- Recognize the use of ATS. Many employers utilize an applicant tracking system (ATS) to help whittle down the applicant pool to the best qualified.

ATS may use keywords that coordinate with skills desired in applicants. Be sure to mirror keywords used in the job listing on your application to further your chances of the application being flagged for consideration.

- Have your résumé at the ready. An application likely will ask you to fill out fields regarding your work history. Refer to your résumé to fill out this portion. Some applications also have an optional tool that will auto-fill job information from an uploaded résumé. Therefore, it is handy to have an updated and proofread file available.

- Use a professional email address. Employers are judging everything about you. Present a professional front by using an email address that is clear and to the point, rather than something clever or controversial. Avoid email addresses like [KissyFace123@email.com](mailto:KissyFace123@email.com) or [ManCave456@email.com](mailto:ManCave456@email.com), opting instead for [FirstName.LastName@email.com](mailto:FirstName.LastName@email.com). Do not give employers any reason to reject you based on perceptions from something as silly as a lighthearted email address.

- Proofread everything. Be sure to look over your application and make sure that everything is spelled correctly and that your grammar is perfect.



If the application makes it through, the employer may ask you to participate in either an in-person interview or an online interview. Some companies rely on a third-party application for you to upload a statement or answer pre-determined questions. Make sure all technology is working for these next steps, and consult the hiring manager with any issues. Always dress and speak professionally when doing interviews of any type.

If you are offered the job, the hiring manager may send further digital correspondence that will link to their onboarding system. This system will collect more information - possibly conducting a criminal background check - and ask that you fill out tax and payroll forms.

The job application process has changed in recent years due to an increased reliance on technology. Applicants should know what to expect to land their dream jobs.

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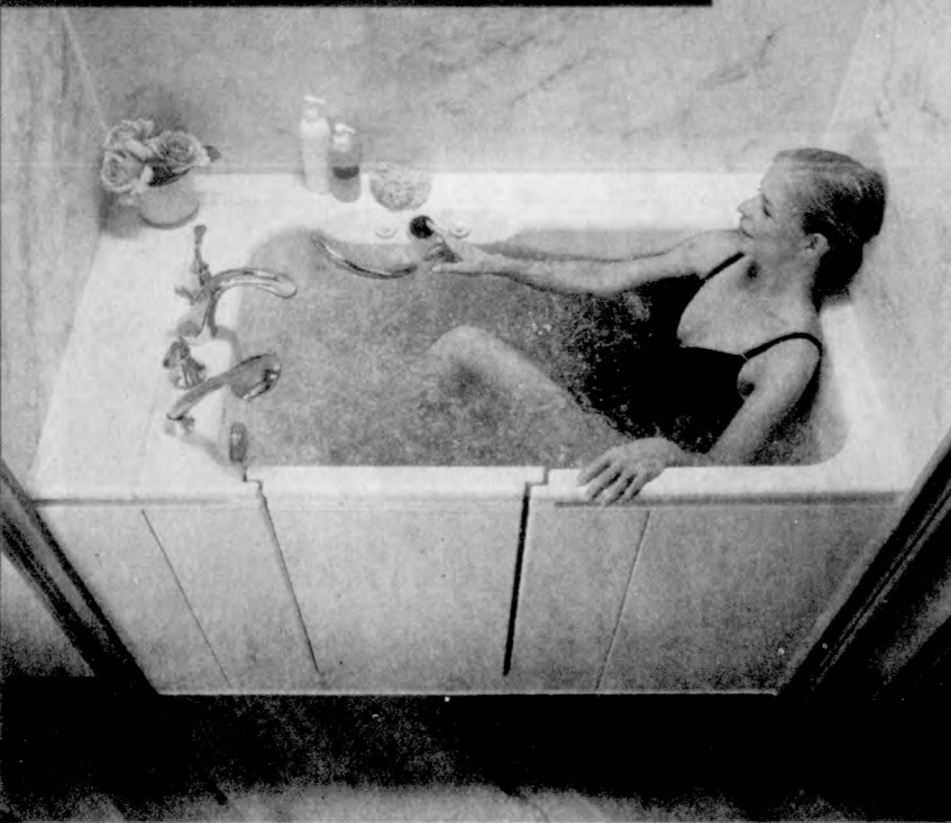
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