

Briefs

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

EVENTS

Donations sought for fair fish fry

BERRIEN SPRINGS — The second annual BCYF fish fry to benefit Berrien County Youth Fair youth exhibitors is set from 5 to 8 p.m. July 23 at the Horticulture Building on the fairgrounds.

Organizers are seeking donations of fish, individuals' time and other supplies.

The event also will include a silent auction. Among items already donated are veterinary services, a family four-pack of Disney World park hopper passes, NASCAR tickets and a load of cut, split and delivered firewood.

Tickets are \$10 and will include fish, sides, dessert and drink. Carryout will be available. To donate or for more information, call (269) 473-4251.

Events planned Saturday at club

EDWARDSBURG — Several events are on tap Saturday at the Edwardsburg Conservation Club, 26524 Pine Lake St., Edwardsburg.

A Relay for Life pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to noon will benefit the "Hook on a Healing" relay team of the VFW Post 2284. The team is trying to raise \$5,000 for the Relay for Life event set for July 31 in Edwardsburg.

A food drive for the Edwardsburg Food Pantry will be from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Canned goods and non-perishables will be accepted.

The Heritage Trail Ride 2010, a motorcycle benefit ride, begins with sign-up from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Riders will leave at noon. Cost is \$20 per single or \$30 per couple. The ride raises money for the Southwest Michigan Area 17 Special Olympics athletes, organizers said. The ride concludes with music from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., minnow races and a raffle.

ENVIRONMENT

Mounted wolverine display not ready

BAY CITY, Mich. — Officials say Michigan's last known wild wolverine is not ready to be mounted and displayed at a visitor center at the Bay City State Recreation Area.

Rex Ainslie, Department of Natural Resource and Environment Wildlife Management Unit supervisor for the Saginaw Bay Area, tells The Bay City Times that the wolverine is still being prepared for display. Ainslie said he didn't know when it would be completed.

The body of the 28-pound female wolverine was found in March along a trail in Michigan's Thumb. State biologists later determined the animal died of natural causes.

The wolverine serves as the state's mascot and for the University of Michigan's sports teams.

CRIME & COURTS

Police: Gun brought to school

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich. — Authorities are still trying to determine whether a 9-year-old boy who brought a fully loaded semiautomatic gun to his Bloomfield Hills elementary school, or his parents, will face charges.

Bloomfield Hills Schools Superintendent Steve Gaynor said in a letter sent to parents Tuesday that the Eastover third-grader earlier in the day showed the gun and a bullet to another student during recess.

The student who was shown the gun reported the incident. Bloomfield Township police were notified, the gun was confiscated, and the child and his parents were questioned.

State's oil production dips

Renewable energy sources on the rise.

By HYONHEE SHIN
Great Lakes Echo

LANSING — Michigan's crude oil production dropped over the past quarter-century while demand and production of renewable energy grew, U.S. Energy Department data shows.

Production dropped be-

cause reserves are exhausted, said Steven Pueppke, director of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station and the Office of Biobased Technologies at Michigan State University.

"It's possible to develop drilling techniques to produce more oil, but it's not easy," he said.

Declining output

Bruce Dale, an MSU chemical engineering and materials science profes-

sor, said the same pattern occurs in all oil-producing regions.

"We find easy oil first, and produce it," he said. "Then it gets harder and harder to find and produce oil, so output declines."

"We have to make a necessary transition to renewable energies," Dale said. "We simply cannot afford to stay in the fossil fuel hole we are now in."

Historically, most of the state's energy has come from fossil fuels — petroleum, natural gas, coal and

some nuclear energy. Currently, these four sources provide 93 percent of the state's power.

Michigan has more natural gas reserves than any other Great Lakes state, but the limited supply of it and other fossil fuels is a concern. Records show a significant drop in fossil fuel production over the past three decades, particularly crude oil.

For example, crude oil accounted for nearly 30 percent of energy produced in Michigan in the

1980s but is now only 4 percent.

And production of crude oil in Michigan dropped by 85 percent between 1980 and 2007, the most recent year for which data is available.

The five counties with the most oil production are: Calhoun, Manistee, Otsego, Grand Traverse and Crawford, according to the Michigan Oil & Gas Producers Education Foundation's 2009 data.

See OIL/B2



Tribune File Photo/JIM RIDER

Blake Sarratore blows bubbles last year during the Niles Summer Parks Program at Southside Park. The program gets under way again this year beginning Monday at Plym Park.

Summer parks program to continue

Only one site scheduled this year.

By TOM MOOR
Tribune Staff Writer

NILES — Hundreds of Niles area students will soon make the transition from the classroom to the park.

The return of the Niles Summer Parks Program, albeit a slimmed-down version, will begin next week at Plym Park.

Once on the chopping block last year because of budget restraints, officials instead elected to host the program at just Plym instead of Eastside, Clevenger and Southside parks as in past years.

Plym, on the city's north side, was chosen because of its location near the Niles-Buchanan YMCA and Wonderland Cinema and because a number of improvements were made to the park last year, including the construction of a new play structure.

Neil Coulston, director of Niles Public Works, originally said he



Tribune File Photo

Children play games during the Niles Summer Parks Program at Eastside Park in this Tribune file photo.

was told to leave the program completely off the budget, but in the end was able to slash the program's \$40,000 budget in half to save it.

"Having it at three parks, kids would normally be closest to their

homes," said Coulston, who added he still expects a large turnout this year. "However, a lot of people dropped their kids off."

The program — geared for students entering first through sixth grade in the fall — will begin on

Monday and go until Aug. 6.

Lunch will be provided by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Niles Salvation Army at no charge to the children, a service Coulston credits for helping to keep the program alive.

Proposed activities for this summer include arts and crafts, outdoor activities, field trips, fire safety, awareness classes through the Niles Fire Department and a drug awareness program and the "Kids on a Line" Fishing Program through the Niles Police Department. There is no cost for park program activities; however, there may be minimal charges for field trips.

Information and sign-up sheets will be available at Plym Park for any late program sign-ups. People interested also can call the Niles Department of Public Works at (269) 684-4700, ext. 208, for more information.

Staff writer Tom Moor:
tmoor@sbtinfo.com
(574) 235-6234

Impersonator sought in missing woman case

Police say someone created alibi for estranged husband.

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Tribune Staff Writer

Five weeks after Venus Stewart's disappearance, Michigan State Police have turned their search toward Virginia for a person who they said impersonated Stewart's estranged husband on April 25 and April 26.

Stewart was last seen on April 26 about 8 a.m. at her parents' home in Colon Township in St.

Joseph County (Mich.). Her estranged husband, Douglas Stewart, was located in Newport News, Va., in the following days.

"At the start of all this, Mr. Stewart claimed to be in Virginia (at the time of Venus' disappearance), and had what we thought was a pretty solid alibi there," said Lt. Mike Risko of the White Pigeon Post. "Several weeks ago we were able to place him in central Ohio the night before Venus came up missing. Recently, more evidence has come to light that actually places him in Michigan the morning of

her disappearance."

Risko added that Douglas Stewart then returned to Virginia that night, but has since returned to Michigan.

On May 11, in a search of a truck owned by Douglas Stewart, the police said they found a receipt dated April 25 from a Walmart in Ohio for items including a tarp, gloves, a shovel and a hat. In the same search police found a substance that preliminary tests indicated to be blood, Risko said.

"Obviously that alibi doesn't hold up, so someone was in Virginia, in the Newport News area,

pretending to be Doug Stewart, in our belief, to provide an alibi," Risko said.

If the person or people impersonating Stewart knew where he was, they could be considered an accessory to any wrongdoing, Risko said.

"It depends on what they knew and when they knew it," he said. "By now that person or persons should know that this is serious, and that they should come forward."

The impersonator paid bills in Stewart's name, among other similar actions, to create a paper trail on the day she van-

ished, police said.

Venus Stewart is white, 5 feet 4, weighs about 130 pounds with brown eyes and brown hair.

Investigators ask anyone who had contact with Douglas Stewart, or someone claiming to be him, on April 25 or April 26 to contact police. Michigan State Police can be reached at (269) 483-7611 until 4 p.m. The Rockford Regional Dispatch Center can be reached at (866) 866-6666, and anyone in the Newport News area can call (888) 562-5887.

Staff writer Douglas Farmer:
dfarmer@sbtinfo.com