

# Businessmen seek support for Oakland cagers

By Wayne Peal  
staff writer

Editor's note: The basketball program on Oakland University's Rochester-area campus has emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. This success well may be traced to the combination of Lee Frederick's rise to head coach and the Oakland 100's formation as a support group. The Oakland 100's story follows. For a related story about the Pioneer's development on the basketball court, see Page 1C.

The Oakland 100 isn't an automobile race. It's a support group for Oakland University basketball.

It isn't alumni-oriented. Most of its members attended other colleges and universities.

In fact, it isn't even the Oakland 100 yet, more like the Oakland 45. But it's growing.

The group, now in its second full year, aims to raise \$100 each from 100 Rochester-area businessmen and wom-

en to help offset Pioneer recruiting costs and also finance a team dinner, golf outing and other community-related activities.

Despite its association with the hoop sport, the group did not begin near a basketball court. It began underwater.

Roger Knapp, Lee Frederick (Oakland head coach) and I all had a scuba diving class at Oakland University around April 1980, recalled local funeral director William Potere Jr., who, like restaurant owner Knapp, was instrumental in forming the organization.

"At the time, an article had just come out featuring Lee and his team, and it reported that things were going pretty rough for them. I think they were down to about eight players through injuries and what not. So since we had become good friends with Lee, we decided to adopt the team," Potere added.

POTERE AND Knapp rounded up a handful of friends, and the Oakland 100 was born late in the 1980-81 season. An immediate byproduct of the

group's founding was a refurbished locker room for Pioneer players. A longer-term byproduct, Potere and Frederick hope, will be increased community support for Oakland's basketball program.

"When I first came here," said Frederick, who recently began his fourth full year as head coach, "we used to show recruits the town and campus, but whenever they'd ask about what kind of support we received, we'd quickly change the subject."

Senior forward Tom Blythe, who played intercollegiate ball for Lake Orion High, also recalled a distinct lack of community support.

"Most of the people who attended our games were either students or parents. We didn't seem to have too much community backing," he said. "I think people felt Oakland University was something off by itself somewhere west of Rochester."

That began to change with the Oakland 100's first full season of activity. Enough group members attended Pioneer home games to merit their own reserved section of the stands.

LAST DECEMBER, the group staged a well-received holiday banquet for the team in the Rochester Community House. (City Manager Kenneth Johnson is among the group's members.)

"We served the most gargantuan meal I've ever seen," Potere said. "Roger had his chef come in to prepare the food, and the stacks must have been at least one-inch thick."

The holiday banquet was repeated this past Monday night.

Some group members spoke to the team about job prospects during a pre-game program. Frederick likes to call his, "Doctor, Lawyer and Indian Chief Night."

From time to time, some group members also traveled to road games with the team.

"One of the things I remember best was going to Hillsdale on the team bus," Potere said. "Here I was sitting there chatting away with guys half my age, and it was a completely natural exchange."

This season, the group provided the team with a locker-room refrigerator. "One of our members operates a

body shop and had the refrigerator painted in the Oakland colors. I think it impressed the team," said Thomas Varner, a charter group member.

The group also provides post-game pizzas and snacks to team members. BEYOND THE side benefits, however, improving Oakland's recruiting position remains the group's major goal.

"To win, you've got to get better players than your opponents," Frederick said. "We never had too much money to spend, so we had to take money out of our operating budget to recruit."

Despite the handicap, the Pioneers mounted a serious bid for the services of all-state center Tim McCormick two years ago, but the Clarkson High product chose the University of Michigan.

This past year, though, the Pioneers recruited a player with somewhat of a national reputation in James (Pop) Tubman, a playmaking guard from the Baltimore area.

Tubman was featured in a Sports Illustrated article about his high school team, the Calvert Hall Cardinals, at the time ranked No. 1 in the nation by high school pollsters.

Tubman's picture even graced the article, but the majority of the reading public might have overlooked it because it followed a special 18-page section featuring the latest in women's swimsuit fashions.

Frederick took note, though, and when Tubman came to town, the Oakland 100 was there to greet him.

"I noticed they were all businessmen, and I plan to go into business," Tubman said.

THE RECRUITING business, as practiced at some other universities, has come under National Collegiate Athletic Association scrutiny on more than one occasion in the past year. One major college power, the University of San Francisco, rethinking its position on sports, even dropped basketball entirely.

Although Oakland's program is placed in the NCAA's Division II category, a step down from the San Francisco, Michigan and Michigan States, active recruiting apparently causes some concerns even for Oakland 100 members.

"When Oakland was founded, it was more a philosophy of our students against yours. Most sports operated only on an intramural level," said Varner. "But that's not the way you do it anymore."

Tubman, too, stressed that his contact with the group represented a luncheon date.

"They didn't buy me a car or anything," he said.

Watchdogs from the NCAA, though, most probably need not trouble themselves with the Oakland 100. At its peak, the group would donate \$10,000 a year to the basketball program — hardly enough to keep a good amateur athlete in a Mercedes.

## Unemployed contemplate the holiday

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

"Pray for families going through their first Christmas when food must be struggled for," the Rev. Steven J. Buck, First United Methodist Church, Royal Oak

IT IS THE SEASON for giving. It's that time of year when families dig deep into their pockets — or bring out the charge cards — to lavish goodies on family and friends.

In many areas, though, this Christmas won't be usual. For the first time, there will be no turkey dinner with trimmings, new clothes and bikes and computers under the tree.

And the holiday won't be easy for the rising number of "new poor" who've never been out of work before.

"We're getting calls from people who've never been in this situation," said Judy Arthur of Troy People Concerned which arranges for food baskets and other aid.

"They're not used to living on such a

small amount. That's why it's so depressing."

With local companies closing, merging and cutting back employees, many steady workers are finding themselves out on the street for the first time.

One Avon Township man was unemployed for the first time in 40 years when Valeron Corp. laid him off recently. At 54 and in good health, he'd missed only two weeks of work in five years with the company.

"WE'RE SEEING people who've never been unemployed before — ever," said Barbara LaFond, Employment Projects Coordinator with Family and Children Services of Oakland County.

"They just don't know how to get it together, how to assess what they have and apply it to this economy."

Unemployed for the first time in 20 years, one marketing executive received only 11 responses to 43 resumes sent out.

With a small side business, the 50-year-old is able to view job hunting as a challenge. "People need to figure out how to make themselves valuable. It's

a challenge at Christmas time or anytime," he said firmly.

But unaccustomed to job hunting and pressured by high bills, many of the "new poor" tend to blame themselves.

"Anytime a person is unemployed it's very tough. But when you've worked all your life it's demeaning to go through the unemployment line," said one area man. "It's rough."

"People are not unemployed right now by choice. It's nobody's fault, but getting that across to unemployed people is real hard," added LaFond, who advises clients to set more realistic goals for themselves than just "getting a job."

ASSETS LIKE homes and cars prevent many "new poor" from qualifying for assistance. And many wouldn't ask anyway.

"The thing with the 'new poor' is that they don't know where to go for help.

They're completely lost," explained Karen Maupin, Field Services Dept. head for Oakland-Livingston Human Services Agency.

"And they're uneasy about asking for help."

The Rev. Terry Euper said despite his congregation's close-knit nature, unemployed members hesitate to ask for help.

"It's easier to help somebody outside the church than inside. It's a sad commentary," said the pastor of Big Beaver United Methodist Church, Troy.

"People are embarrassed and don't want to reach out and ask for help."

FOR THOSE who've emphasized the religious nature of the holidays, it's somehow easier to get through Christmas unemployed.

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