

They'll watch your house

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every day," Barrett said.  
CHECKMATES isn't a house-sitting service, Barrett emphasized. Barrett and Smith won't spend nights in a home or take care of pets.  
"We haven't said anything about dogs or animals," Barrett said. "If I walked in, and a Doberman was there... That's just common sense."  
"We're staying away from watching animals," she went on. "That's a big responsibility and that animal could turn on you. We haven't really ruled it out, but we're leery about it."  
The business asks for at least a few days' notice, Barrett and Smith will meet with the residents and sign an agreement with them. "That way they would know us," Barrett said.  
The contract stipulates that the workers will go into the home a certain number of times. Barrett said there are ways of proving that this was done, such as calling a number that would appear on the

resident's phone bill, along with listing the date it was called.  
Barrett said the business has served three clients so far in its two weeks of operation. One way she and Smith have acquired clients has been to leave their names with travel agencies, Barrett said.  
"We're getting a pretty decent response," said. "Everybody has seemed very receptive."  
Barrett said she and Smith saw the house-watching idea in a Detroit newspaper. "Everyone seemed to think it was a good idea," Barrett said. "If you do leave your house, you really are scared."  
A professional service offers advantages over asking neighbors to keep an eye on the home, Barrett said.  
"A lot of people don't want their neighbors in the house for various reasons," she said. "A lot of the neighbors never go anywhere, and you can't repay the favor. And someone told me, 'I get tired of asking my neighbors.'"  
To contact Checkmates, call 553-8928 or 553-7408.

Michigan tourism picking up

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The U.S. Travel Data Center, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., indicated early last year that Michigan tourism would decline by nine to 11 percent, Drury said. "While travel nationwide declined 7.8 percent from January through October, we fared much better than predicted."  
Michigan Travel Bureau figures show the 1982 summer season occupancy rate at lodgings in the state fell 3.1 percent compared to last year.  
While southern Michigan facilities surveyed registered a slight increase in occupancies of 3 percent, facilities in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula had respective drops of 4.7 and 3.5 percent.  
Travel was bolstered also by the slowing of the inflation rate. The Travel Price Index, which reflects Michigan's travel costs, rose 5.7 percent in 1981-82, compared to 12.9 percent in 1980-81. Travelers in Michigan spent an average \$83.50 per night last year compared to \$81.50 in 1981.

Michigan's summer tourism was hurt by the economy, cool and wet weather and the World's Fair in Knoxville, which drew more than 11 million visitors, according to the Auto Club. The summer season traditionally accounts for as much as 60 percent of the annual tourism activity in the state.  
The bitter cold and weekend storms in January and an unseasonably mild December that kept skiers off the slopes were cited as another negative factor.  
The number of miles driven in Michigan last year dropped one percent from 1981 to 81.3 billion, while the number of Mackinac Bridge crossings dropped 1.1 percent below 1981 figures.  
The total visitor counts for the 10 travel information centers monitored statewide during the 15-week summer season rose 5.3 percent. Sault Ste. Marie and Mackinac City experienced total increases during all but one of the 15 weekly periods.

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