

# Group returns from Guadalajara

By Marie Chesney  
staff writer

A group of Redford Union School District teachers and students found themselves frighteningly close last week to a Mexican neighborhood devastated by a series of sewer system explosions in which a known 200 people died and more than 750 were injured.

Group members, in Guadalajara on spring break, became stranded in a deserted hotel as police, soldiers and Red Cross workers dug through the rubble of homes and businesses to rescue people trapped in the debris.

The mile-long devastated area was about five blocks from the group's hotel, the distance between Redford Union and Thurston High, said Mary Haggert, a Redford Union librarian who spent Wednesday and Thursday with other group members isolated in the Calinda Roma Hotel after most of the city had been evacuated.

GROUP MEMBERS escaped evacuation because earlier in the day, before the explosions occurred, they had separated, some to stay in the city to shop and others to go to a

lake, Haggert said.

Rescue workers let them stay in the evacuated hotel until both groups were reunited, she said.

From their hotel windows, the teachers and students watched rescue operations taking place amid the catastrophe. Officials would not let them leave the hotel.

"The police, the Army, ambulances were out all night, searching for people and watching for looters," Haggert said.

Officials believe the explosions were caused by a flammable gas that leaked into the city's sewer system.

Haggert was part of the three-member group that stayed in the city Wednesday. Starting about 9 a.m., she heard as many as 10 explosions throughout the day.

Group members who went to the lake did not hear the explosions and did not learn of the catastrophe until they returned to Guadalajara later in the day.

Redford Union senior Brent Edwards was asleep in the hotel when the first explosion occurred. Haggert and her sister, Grace Baker of California, had already left the hotel.

"We heard an explosion and thought construction workers had hit

**'The police, the Army, ambulances were out all night, searching for people and watching for looters.'**

— Mary Haggert

a gas main. We went about our business and then heard more explosions throughout the day. It was about 12:30 p.m. before we began to understand that something terrible had happened. We found out that it was not construction workers, but that 20 blocks had blew up."

The series of explosions in the sewer destroyed a mile-long area in Mexico's second largest city. The explosions ripped open streets, blew up adobe buildings lining the streets, and hurled people, cars and trucks into the air.

The explosions shook Brent's hotel room, waking him up. When the hotel was evacuated, he was forced to leave the area by himself.

"We had a hard time getting everyone back together," Haggert said.

REUNITED LATER in the day,

group members first were confined to the hotel lobby. They made sandwiches for rescue workers and then were allowed to return to their rooms.

On the trip were Redford Union teachers: Haggert of Redford; and Alex Mestas, a Farmington Hills resident who teaches Spanish, English and drama; Tom Grove of Brighton, who teaches art; and James Calhoun of Detroit, a business teacher. The trip was not sponsored by the district.

Redford Union students on the trip were: Edwards, sophomore Scott Bailey; senior Lisa Delvechko; senior Sue Hronec; and Redford Union graduate Candi Nyberg. The group also included four friends or family of the teachers.

Group members had planned to spend Thursday, their last day in Guadalajara, shopping in the city's market. Instead, they spent it in their hotel room, wondering if they would be able to get to the airport.

They finally left Guadalajara late Thursday by plane for the city of Puerto Vallarta.

The teachers and students will arrive at Detroit Metro Airport today at 11:23 p.m. on American Airlines Flight 158.

## Robber hits bank, escapes with cash

Police are seeking a man who robbed the Michigan National Bank at 3294 South Blvd. Thursday morning and escaped with a small amount of cash.

Bloomfield Township police Lt. Jeffrey Werner said the man came into the bank about 10:45 a.m. He claimed to be armed and demanded the teller place money in a small paper bag.

Police said he threatened to shoot

the teller, although no weapon was produced.

After getting the money, the man ran out and fled in an unknown direction.

Werner described the man as a white male in his early 20s with a light complexion, 5-feet-10-inches tall and weighing 170 pounds. He was wearing a gray hooded sweat shirt, sunglasses and a plaid scarf.

Anyone with information should call the police at 433-7755.

## Synagogue speaker set

The sisterhood of Congregation Beit Kodesh will meet at 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, at the synagogue, 31840 W. Seven Mile Road, Livonia.

Joe Torica, of Beth Abraham Syn-

agogue, will speak on "Sephardic Culture and Customs." The public is invited to attend. Refreshments will be served.



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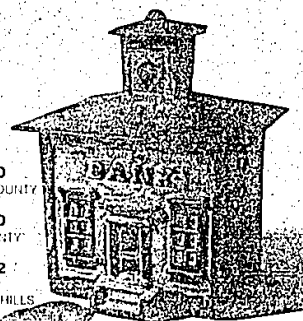
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## A Cub visit

Joe Fishoni was one of several cub scouts from Den 5 who visited residents of American House on Middlebelt Road in Farmington Hills. Cub scouts brought Easter plants for the occasion. After watching a video, "It's the Easter Boggle, Charlie Brown" with the residents, the cub scouts performed their own skit based on the story of "Good Samaritan."

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