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The Hartsells also feel blessed to have a pair of co-MVPs — most valuable parents — on their side. Lawrence and Georgia Hartsell have gone the extra mile to make it all possible. They have been supportive, yet have known when to back off and keep their distance.

"You couldn't pick out a more perfect set of parents," Steven said. "They've been selectively naïve about things. They've always left it up to us. They're there to support us, but they don't push us over the edge. They've been through all the ups-and-downs for us."

Danielle nearly gets choked up when talking about her parents.

"Steve and I are where we are today because of them," she said. "We've been able to get to where we want to be because they've given up everything to make a dream come true for us."

"Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to make the Olympics, but now the reason I want to be there is for them."

What the future holds for the Hartsells beyond Los Angeles and perhaps Salt Lake is unknown; Being U.S. National Pairs champions, some professional skating company will like be calling after the Olympics.

"Right now we're putting on hold any decisions," Danielle said. "There have been times when we've said this is it, but we'll evaluate it after."

"We really haven't had time to think about it because we've been working so hard. Our coaches have been surprised. If we can keep it up like this, there will be a lot of possibilities."

Steven doesn't hesitate to say the Hartsells are headed on the right track. The quest to make the Olympics has galvanized the pair.

"We've prided on being one of the most conditioned teams," he said. "There's only so much to do in a short period of time, but we feel we're in the best shape that we've been in awhile."

"We feel we're the ultimate wildcard."

Piette, Taormina set to carry Olympic torch

The Olympic torch relay will pass through 48 states with a distinct Observerland flavor.

Livonia swimmer-triathlete Sheila Taormina, a gold medalist in the 1996 Summer Olympic Games (women's 4 x 200-meter freestyle) and sixth place finisher first women's triathlon in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, is scheduled to carry the torch at 4:21 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 6, in Warren.

Former Redford Union High and Michigan State football standout Tom Piette will also carry the flame Jan. 4 as it passes through Chicago, Ill.

Piette was selected to be a torchbearer by the Regional Olympic Steering Committee after being nominated by his co-workers at General Motors, where he has enjoyed a 16-year career with the corporation's service and parts operation.

Piette was selected to represent Chevrolet in the Olympic torch relay for his "leadership, teamwork, dedication, dependability and achievement."

Piette is scheduled to intercept the flame at 4:06 p.m. in the Little Italy neighborhood of Chicago.

He'll run two-10ths of a mile down Taylor Street.

Piette's mother, siblings (he is the youngest of six children), other family members and friends are traveling from various parts of the country to cheer him on.

"When the flame is passed to me, I'm going to raise the torch as high as I can, that's my salute to my coworkers at GM," Piette said. "Then, when I run two-10ths of a mile, that's dedicated to all the families that had their lives torn apart in the wake of Sept. 11 — and to America, my country."

"At the end of my run, I'm going to raise the torch as high as I can, and that's dedicated to my mom, my family and the people that I love."

Piette graduate from RU in 1978. He received first-team All-State and All-Observer honors in 1997 and was recognized with a citizenship award from the American Legion.

Piette earned a football scholarship to MSU where he played center four years (1978-82).

His freshman year, Piette

played on MSU's 1978 Big Ten championship team. As a junior, he received first-team All-Big Ten (UPI) honors. In 1982 he was selected to play in the Hula Bowl Classic College All-State Game. He graduated from MSU's College of Agriculture in 1982 and holds an M.B.A. degree.

After graduating from MSU, Piette played center in the U.S. Football League for two seasons including stints with the Michigan Panthers, Chicago Blitz and Arizona Wranglers. Legendary Blitz coach George Allen acquired Piette for ten players, the biggest trade in USFL history. Piette retired from pro football in 1985.

Accepting the award in honor of his mother, Bernice, who still resides in Redford Township, Piette was presented with a \$1,000 check to donate to the charity of his choice.

He chose to donate the funds to Redford Union High School's athletic department.

Piette currently resides in Naperville, Ill. with his son Nathan.

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Saturday, January 12 • 7:30 PM VS. CHARLOTTE HORNETS Kmart Photo Saturday. Have your photo taken with a Pistons player on the floor from 6:00 to 6:20.	
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Proceeds from this event at the Pistons-Lakers game on January 8, 2002 benefit the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center.



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