

County to hire garden officer

A new community service officer will be hired next year to oversee non-violent offenders' work on a county garden project.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners gave unanimous approval to a \$10-an-hour, 1,000-hour position that could have a big impact on cutting jail costs and reducing jail food costs.

The garden will be on the site of Oakland's trusty camp in Auburn Hills, according to Commissioner Richard Kuhn Jr., R-Waterford, chairman of the board's public ser-

vices committee.

Misdemeanors from the county-operated 52nd District Court, at a judge's request, can work off their sentences in the open-air garden rather than in jail. The judges figured the garden could produce \$13,000 worth of food for the jail and save \$25,000 a year in jail costs.

Other costs of the program — mileage, water, grounds supplies and land preparation — are estimated at \$4,600. They would be offset by \$5,400 in oversight fees paid by the probationers.

County auction is next Saturday

The annual fall auction of recovered stolen property will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 1, at the Oakland County Service Center, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

Site is behind the central garage. "This is a great opportunity for bargain hunters to come and find good buys," said County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

Some 50 late-model General Motors vehicles — including several Chevrolet patrol cars — will be on sale. Vehicles may be viewed and inspected by the public from 9 a.m. to

4 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Sept. 29-30.

Other items will be available for viewing only on the morning of the auction. Gates will be open at 8:30 a.m. for inspection.

For sale will be name-brand tools, bicycles, stereo equipment and jewelry, among other stolen items recovered by the sheriff's department.

County government will auction more than 30 office machines, including IBM typewriters and 40 pieces of office furniture.

RR buffs set final trip

The 1988 official "West Michigan Train" season ends with trips to the U.S. Air Force Museum and Crossroads Village near Flint.

On Saturday, Oct. 1, the "Air Force Flyer" travels from Allen Park on a one-day, 450-mile round trip to the U.S. Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio.

On Saturday, Oct. 15, the "Fall

Harvest Jubilee Special" travels from Livonia to Flint with bus connections to the Crossroads Village and the Huckleberry Railroad's vintage steam trains.

Fares and schedules are available by calling 272-5848 or 284-4418. The trips are sponsored by the Bluewater Michigan Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society in Royal Oak.

MET rates high

Bowman to review loan costs for tuition plan

AP — State Treasurer Robert Bowman says he's reviewing the interest rates charged for the state's guaranteed college tuition program to determine if some are too high.

Bowman said the Michigan League of Savings Institutions may lose its exclusive contract with the state — which is guaranteeing Michigan Education Trust loans — "if 14 (percent) and 15 percent becomes common place."

"The contract says they must charge competitive rates of a state-wide basis. But (determining what's competitive) is at my discretion," Bowman said.

Bowman will review interest rates at the end of this month before making any decision about the contract, he said.

BOWMAN SAID only one of 620 institutions in the program was charging above 15 percent, and he would take action only "if those (rates) become the rule and not the exception." But that's not the case right now.

He didn't name the institution.

According to a state-compiled list that accompanied tuition agreements sent to parents earlier, fixed-interest rates for MET loans last week ranged from 9 percent to 12.25

percent.

The highest rate was being charged by the state's two largest savings institutions: First Federal of Michigan, based in Detroit, and Standard Federal Savings, based in Troy. The bottom rate of 9 percent was offered by Mutual Savings & Loan, based in Bay City, and Charlotte's Eaton Federal Savings Bank.

VARIABLE-RATE loans also were being offered.

The lowest, according to the state's list, was 8.5 percent at Traverse City's small Northwestern Savings and Loan. But business has been so brisk, Northwestern is limiting them to customers in the 10-county area around Traverse City.

The banks and savings and loans defend their rates.

"I don't apologize for our rate a bit," said Thomas Bower, senior vice president at Great Lakes Savings in Ann Arbor. It is charging 11.25 percent for a loan of up to seven years and 12 percent for longer loans. Its variable-rate loan is being offered at 9.75 percent.

The institutions say that in most cases their rates are below home equity loan rates and well below those charged for personal loans.

They also say such a guaranteed

tuition program never has been offered anywhere before, so setting rates required some guesswork.

BOWMAN, HOWEVER, said he expects rates will drop before the Nov. 30 deadline for parents and others to pay for their tuition guarantees.

"I don't have the power to set in-

terest rates, and I'm not looking for that power," Bowman said, adding he felt the 12.25 percent interest rate charged by many institutions wasn't excessive.

Under the MET program, parents can pay \$6,756 for a newborn to guarantee four years of tuition later at a Michigan university.

State test scores match the nation's

Michigan's 1988 composite American College Test (ACT) score matched the national average, the first time in 15 years Michigan students didn't top the national average.

The score, 18.8, matched last year's state score. State scores have fluctuated between 18.8 and 18.9 for the past five years. Michigan's highest score, 19.6, was recorded in 1974.

Scores were released recently by the Michigan State Board of Education.

ACT test scores are used to deter-

mine students' eligibility for most midwestern colleges.

Michigan's students exceeded the national average in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), a similar test more commonly used by eastern colleges.

The Michigan average on the verbal portion of the test was 457. The national average was 428. The Michigan mathematics average was 513. The national average was 476.

The ACT test is taken by four times as many Michigan high school students as the SAT, according to state board statistics.



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