

OAKLAND JOURNAL

Oakland Journal is a roundup of Oakland County news and notes collected from government, school, civic, community and neighborhood sources. Please write: Oakland Journal, c/o Oakland County editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

HOLIDAY PARTY

Oakland County Employee's Christmas Party on Friday was the setting for holiday cheer and more than a little good will. County executive L. Brooks Patterson presented checks totalling \$20,000 to nine local charities who are using the funds to purchase food, clothing and gifts for those in need. The donations came from the county's Casual Day Fund, which employees contribute a dollar to every Friday for the privilege of wearing casual attire to work.

AMI RAFFLE

The Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Oakland County will hold its ninth annual limited ticket raffle. Grand prize is a 1998 Corvette or \$30,000 cash. Other prizes include a TV, VCR and camcorder. Tickets are \$100 and only 1,200 tickets will be sold. Drawing will be 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 23, at the Jack Aubrey Dealership in West Bloomfield. Proceeds from the sale help support research, education, support groups, housing and advocacy for the needs of individuals with mental illness and the needs of their families. For ticket information, call (248) 557-6440.

TOYS FOR TOTS

MedMax, INC., of Southfield, has joined the 1998 Toys for Tots program sponsored by the United States Marine Corp. Upon

dropping off an unwrapped gift, customers will receive a coupon for \$5 off a purchase of \$20 or more. MedMax stores are located in Westland, Troy, Taylor, and Farmington Hills.

441 COURSE

A 4-H Dale Carnegie Course will be held for those ages 16 to 19 who have been in 4-H for at least a year. The "Take Charge" course will run every Saturday from 12:30-4:30 p.m. from Jan. 31 to April 25 at Hope Methodist Church in Southfield. The course is designed to help 4-H members increase their leadership and communication skills.

TREE DISPOSAL

Oakland County residents are asked to take a "green approach" to the disposal of Christmas trees by disposing of them from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Dec. 27 to Jan. 11 at 10 county parks. The program is free. The 10 parks are Addison Oaks, near Oxford, Glen Oaks Golf Course in Farmington Hills, Groveland Oaks near Holly, Independence Oaks near Clarkston, Lyon Oaks in Lyon Township, Orion Oaks in Orion Township, Red Oaks in Madison Heights, Springfield Oaks Activity Center in Davisburg, Waterford Oaks Activity Center in Waterford and White Lake Oaks near Pontiac. Holiday trees also will be recycled at Independence and Orion Oaks parks through Jan. 26. The self-serve program is sponsored by Oakland County Parks, Burdino's Better Blooms and the Detroit Zoo Club, a lumber industry organization. For more information and exact park location, call (248) 858-0906, TDD: (248) 858-1684 or visit the parks website at www.co.oakland.mi.us.

Senate encourages schools to delay start until after Labor Day

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Tourism got a couple of slices from the full loaf when the Michigan Legislature acted on bills to push the starting date of school after Labor Day.

On its final day of the fall session: ■ The Senate barely passed a bill, 20-16, to guarantee a four-day Labor Day weekend. It wouldn't order school districts to push the starting time after Labor Day, but it would plunk an immediate disruption in the schedules of those that do.

■ The House defeated, 35-71, a bill to require that public schools not open their doors until after Labor Day, the first Monday in September.

"This legislation is supported by business interests but not by a majority of the constituents it represents," said Rep. Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills, summing up the opposition. "By a 3-1 margin, constituents have urged me to defend local control. Accordingly, I vote 'no' on this bill."

The House bill was sponsored by Rep. Pat Gagliardi, D-Drummond Island. The tourism industry sees its best months as July and August. When schools open the last week in August, one-eighth of the season is lost for families.

"If we can have a day off and help an industry survive," that's a positive," said Senate floor leader Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron.

School districts generally opposed the bill because it

infringes on local control and reduces their scheduling flexibility.

Here is how area representatives voted in defeating House Bill 6080:

Yes — Andrew Raczkowski, R-Farmington Hills.

No — Penny Crissman, R-Rochester; Barbara Dobb, R-Union Lake; Patricia Godchaux, R-Birmingham; Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak; Tom Middleton, R-Orionville.

Not voting — Nancy Quarles, D-Southfield.

Rep. Frank Fitzgerald, R-Grand Lodge, won voice approval of an amendment to set up a School Calendar Commission to study arguments for and against post-Labor Day opening. Its importance became nil when the full bill was rejected.

Rep. Judith Scranton, R-Brighton, lost with her amendment to add that school activities not start prior to the first day of class. It went down 16-86.

The Senate bill, which faces an uncertain future in the House, was seen as a compromise measure, aimed at nudging schools to start classes after Labor Day but not requiring it.

Here is how area senators voted on SB 300:

Yes — none.

No — Bill Bullard, R-Milford, Mike Bouchard, R-Birmingham, Mat Dunaskis, R-Orionville, Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township.

Kmart wins an age discrimination suit

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Eleven former Kmart advertising employees lost their age discrimination case against Kmart Corp. in the state Court of Appeals.

But they did win an undisclosed settlement from Meridian Retail Inc., the company to which Kmart farmed out its advertising work in 1993.

"We conclude that plaintiffs failed to establish that age was a determining factor in Kmart's decision to outsource the CAD (creative advertising department) to Meridian," the appeals court said.

Plaintiffs also failed to establish a conspiracy between Kmart and Meridian to discriminate on the basis of age, the court said.

Further, plaintiffs failed to rebut Kmart's reasons for outsourcing the CAD department, the court said, adding that the claim against Kmart was properly dismissed by Oakland Circuit Judge Steven N. Andrews.

The 3-0 appellate decision was signed by Judges Jane E. Markey of Saginaw, Kathleen Jansen of Macomb County and Helen N. White of Detroit.

Robert Sosin, the Franklin attorney who represented the employees, said the settlement with Meridian was "satisfactory under the circumstances," but that the employees weren't "made whole."

His clients included Martha Crafcheck, Jean Pace, Dino Linaras, James Bierbusse,

Frank Stachurski, Bonnie Meier, Nancy Reynolds, David Pierce, Kevin Kerin, Mireca Munteanu and Patricia Chapman.

Kmart, at its world headquarters in Troy, decided in December of 1993 to eliminate the CAD and outsource the work to Meridian. Kmart eliminated 73 of the 83 jobs, including the plaintiffs'. Kmart cited the need to cut overhead and production costs.

The appeal charged that: ■ Kmart "organized Meridian, exclusively for the purpose of Meridian doing business for and with Kmart, and that Meridian was the mere alter ego of Kmart."

■ "None of the plaintiffs were offered comparable jobs with Meridian" despite their experience and qualifications.

■ Meridian agreed to "use its best efforts" to hire as many CAD employees as possible. Meridian interviewed 69, offered jobs to 80 percent of those under age 45 and to 35.7 percent who were 45 or older.

Six of the 11 plaintiffs said Kmart agents "created implied contracts of employment," and that plaintiffs could be terminated only for cause.

But the appeals court said Kmart's statements "were either not clear and unequivocal or did not demonstrate a clear intention..."

Sosin said his clients had made no decision on whether to appeal to the state Supreme Court.

Donations go toward helping abused kids

Secret Santos abound at this time of year, and Oakland County Prosecutor David Goreyca demonstrated Friday that his department is no exception. Money collected from casual days turned into gifts for abused children all year round.

Goreyca presented a check to the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County from donations prosecutor's office employees made throughout the year for dressing casually on Fridays. The

money will be used to purchase juice and snacks for the more than 500 children who are interviewed each year in the CARE House program of the Child Abuse and Neglect Council.

That program includes collaborative teams of police, protective service and prosecutors interviewing children regarding allegations of abuse, both physical and sexual.

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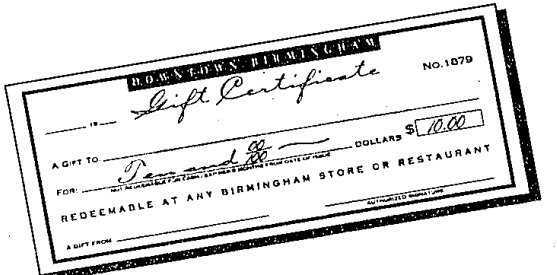
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