with the help of pictures substi-tuted for train-related work. Together with illustrator Nancy Windlow Parker, Neitzel acquaints her young audience with words like "caboose, "loco-motive," "gondola," and "trestle," recreating the adventure that a train ride still provides. Pienty of detail in each picture keeps young minds and eyes occupied. In "The Hungry Black Bag"

young minds and eyes occupied.

In 'The Hungry Black Beg' (Houghton Mifflin, 1989, 316), Ann Tompert demonstrates groed in action. It's market day, when all the animals sell their merchandiss at the town square. Ole Goat of Grede Mountain brings a big black bag. But he doesn't want to buy; he just wants to grab. 'I have mountains of stuff. But that's not enough. I want more, more, more 'he bellows as he steals from Owl, Fox, Percupine, and Rabbit. Jacqueline Chavast's brilliant water-color pictures add vitality and humor to Tompert's fable, where justice prevails in the end.

fable, where justice prevails in the end.

For the school-age child, there is "The Legend of Mackinac Island' (Sleeping Bear Press, 1999, \$17.95). It is written and illustrated by the same dynamic due that created the highly successful 'Legend of Sleeping Bear' (1997): Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen of Bath, Mich., and Kathy-je Wargin. In swirling forms wibrant with sensous colors and a superb lyrical text, artist and author draw, once again, on Indian folklore for a creation story. This time young readers will learn the poetic explanation for the origin of Mackinac Island, "the place of the great turle's back."

All books are available at Halfway-Down-the-Stairs Children Book Shop at 114 E. 4th Street in Rochester.

Esther Litmann is a resident

Question: What makes Michigan an ideal setting for children's litera-

Answer:
Beaches,
islands, forests,
farmland, railroads, legends,
and a very colorful history.

turo?

But it's the talented and innovative people — members of the very active and dedicated Michigan Chapter of the National Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators — whom we must credit for their imaginative use of our state's special resources to capture the essence and interests of childhood.

This work? "Book Broak" will

and interests of childhood. This week's "Book Break" will focus on six delightful picture books for the preschool crowd. Recommendations for middle-schoolers will be in my next column. All are either written or illustrated by Michigan residents.

In "Good Knight" (Henry Holt, 1998, \$19.95) Linda R. Rymill of

in Good Might (Henry Hott, 1998, \$19.95) Linda R Rymill of Rochester humorowsly depicts the bed-time battle waged nightly between mothers and their young "knights." After all, real boys don't go to sleep when there are fires to extinguish, cate to rescue, and castles to protect. "You can't make me!" is our doughty here's battle cry. But in the end, he gives up his arms for his mother's loving embrace. Illustrator G. Brian Karas expertly renders the focus and defiance of four-year-olds in a book that will make adults, as well as children, smile in recognition.
"Sand Castles" (Greenwillow

"Sand Coatles" (Greenwillow

"Sand Castles" (Greenwillow Books, 1999, \$16) is a story of cooperation and friendship, writ-ten by Brenda Shannon Yee of Rochester Hills. Jen is sculpting a castle falk is joined by several children on the beach. Each offers to help by building a most, a path, a wall, and a road. The

**BOOK HAPPENINGS** 

Delightful picture books

cater to preschool crowd

banter F

mals sound "funny" when they catch a cold? Rhon-da Gowler Greene of West Bloomfield insists that

text is cumulative, giving pre-readers the chance to chime in on the refrain that grows each time a new activity is added. Pictures by Thea Kiros are charmingly realistic and invite long, linger-ing looks at the diversity of youthful faces.

ing looks at the diversity of youthful faces.

Do animals sound "funny" when they catch a cold? Rhonda Gowler Greene of West Bloomield insists that they do in "Barnyard Song" (Atheneum Books, 1997, 513). The idea and execution is pure whimey and aure to make a sick child giggle. A rollicking text reflects the forceful rhythms of a square dance: "Farmer called the doctor and the nurse came too, and the three did agree it was the barnyard flu." Comical illustrations by Robert Bender add to the fun of this very innovative children's book.

'In. Tim Taking a Trip on My 'In. Tim Taking a Trip on My

they do in "Barnyard Song."

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## GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

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p.m. on Friday & Salanday & 75st all shows Toesday, Box Office opens at 400 pm Monday - Friday only, Call Theothe fee Feetures and Times 1.0. required for "X" rated shows 



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THE WINGLOW BOT (C)
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COOLET FORTUME (f)
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BOOK SIGNINGS
Farmington Observer reporter and
Livonia resident Tim Smith will
sign copies of his new book,
"Miracle Blinth Stories of Very
Premature Bables – Little Thumbs
upl' at the following locations:

# 24 p.m. Sunday, June 20,
Barnes and Noble Booksellers,
Haggerty and Sik Mile roads in
Northville Township.

# 7 p.m. Tuesdey, June 22,
Author Jim Craig signs "Stranger
Around the Comer," Rochester
Borders, 1122 Rochester Road,

Rochester Hilfs. (248) 652-0558. 2-4 p.m. Saturday, July 3, Little Professor on the Park, Main

book.

In "I'm Taking a Trip on My Train" (Greenwillow Books, 1999, \$15), Shirley Neitzel, a resident of Grand Rapids, invites youngsters to "read" her book

p.m. Saturday, July 3, Little Professor on the Park, Mein Street In Plymouth. PLYMOUTH DISTRICT LIBRARY Linds Grekin, a librarian at Hillel Day School in Farmington Hills, will read from her book and talk about the research and interviews ahe did for "I'll Newer Get Lost Again: The Complete Guide to Improving Your Sense of Direction," 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 22, at the library, 223 S. Main St., Pymouth. Call (734) 455-0750
BALDWIN LIBRARY JERSEL

453-0750

BALDWIN LIBRARY (BIRMINGHAM)
Summer Down Under Is a reading event for children preschool
through eighth grade that intoduces the culture and history of
Australia. The event runs from
June 21 to Aug. 8; on June 21
Baldwin will hold an open house
from 2 to 5 p.m. to kick off the

event. Students in middle school or high school can beat the heat by joining the Young Adult Summer Reading Club at the library, 300 W. Merrill, Birmingham. (248) 647-1700.

Street in Rochester.

Esther Littmann is a resident
of Bloomfield Township and a
tutor in English and German.
You can leave her a message from
a touch-tone phone at (734) 9532047, mailbox number 1893. Her
fax number is (248) 644-1314.

BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP LIBRARY
Renee Killingsworth will talk
about her first rovel, "Morning
Drive to Midnight" and the Joys
and challenges of sail-publishing
Sundey, June 27, 3 to 5 p.m. at
the library, Lone Pine and
Telegraph roads. The event will
include a book signing and reception. "Morning" is the story of
Adrienne Daniels, who is determined to become a major player
in the radio broadcast industry.
When a sudden opportunity arises, she puts everything on the
lins to turn around a feiling radio
station and make it No. 1 in
Chicago. BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP LIRPARY

WEEKENDS

## West Bloomfield resident full of hot air and ready to fly

By Mary Quinley Special Writer

As a youngster, Marty Gauthi-or yearned for his chance to experience the thrill of piloting a hot air balloon, a task that sev-eral of his siblings had mas-tered.

eral of his storing and mastered.

"In the 180a, after a day of flying with my family, my brothers would drop me off with their empty propane tanks," said Gauthier of West Bloomieid." I would fill 30 to 40 tanks in my parent's backyard.

On Gauthier's 16th birthday, he completed his first solo ballow, to the complete his first solo ballow, Joy, Joy, Ted, and Dan also are plott, below, Ted, and Dan also are bloomy to the complete his four brothers, Cloth, West weeked Gauthier plan.

Next weekend, Gauthier plans to compete in the Michigan Challenge Balloonfest with "Ful-fillment," his rainbow-tinted balloen.
"I'll be in the hunt trying to

win," says Gauthier. "Several of my brothers also will be competing. I have as good a chance as anybody."

The Howell-based festival, dubbed the state championship of hot-air ballooning, will host a competition for mere than 50 balloonists. If you go, be sure to balloonists. If you go, be sure to check out Pepe the Penguin, Mrs. Buttarworth, and Mr. Biddle, as they are inflated on the launch field and take flight.

Serena's Song, a brilliant-blue balloon with a wheelchair accessible symbol, is available for children and adults who use wheelchairs. In addition to balloon watching, the festival features a weekend of family-friendly activities. You'll be treated to aky-diving shows, stunt-kite performances, an antique and custom car show, kid's games, a carnival, endless entertainment and food booths.

Michigan Challenge
Balloonfeat
When: 2-11 p.m. Friday, June
25, 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, June 26-27.
Where: Howell High School,
1200 W. Grand River, Howell
Cost: Parking passes, \$8
dally, \$12 weekend (includes
admission for everyone in car
and three chances to win a
hot- eir balloon ride for two);
discounted weekend passes
svaliable at any National City
Benk in Livingston County
until June 25,
Handleap balloon rides: Free
tethered rides 68 p.m. Friday,
June 25, and 6-8 a.m. and 6-8
p.m. Seturday-Sunday, June
26-27,
Information: Call the Howell
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Information: Call the Howell Area Chamber of Commerce at (517) 546-3920 or visit www.michiganchallenge.com.

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