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parents. "It was getting to be too much to juggle everything and continue a business."

But other factors helped the couple decide it was the right time to give up the downtown Farmington store they started from scratch. Sports Image specialized in customized, hand-sewn sporting apparel.

The owners couldn't find someone to help Becky with the sewing burden, something needed in order to continue a business in which about 300 high school varsity jackets were customized annually with letters, numbers and patches.

Carl said his wife, also 41, is one of the few people in Michigan who knows how to chain-stitch, a rare skill he equated to "using a sewing machine like a crayon." She puts the stencil on first and then fills it in by hand, just like a coloring book.

In a society where people want instant gratification, said Carl, it was becoming more evident with each year that more

**'They want everything instantly. They just don't understand that something hand-crafted takes time to complete.'**

**Carl Thomas**  
Sports Image owner

customers could not withstand a wait - that sometimes lasted eight weeks - for their custom orders to be filled.

"We've seen people's patience drop," he said, standing near the front of his barren store Tuesday, just two days before the doors were closed for good. "They want everything instantly. They just don't understand that something hand-crafted takes time to complete."

Similarly, finding and training reliable employees to take those orders also became more of a challenge.

He said it was difficult, nearly

impossible, to find employees who wouldn't mind paying "a lot of attention" to specific details of customer orders when other stores could pay them more to weave items past a computerized scanner.

The family agonized for more than a year about whether it was time to either downsize their business or leave it altogether. They ultimately made their decision to close last Thanksgiving.

"It was our choice to get into this and it was our choice to get out," said Carl, who is a senior analyst at Unisys.

Thomas emphasized that business still was good, with the bulk of it coming from Farmington school district athletic teams. And downtown Farmington was an ideal location, he added.

"We've enjoyed it," he said. "It's been a great experience for us and our kids."

During the final days of the business, customers were able to purchase items at an 80 percent discount. Any unsold clothing items were to have been donated to the Detroit Rescue Mission, Thomas said.

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Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce, said the store "brings a nice feel" to downtown Farmington.

McCormick estimated that about 70 percent of the furnishings in the Encore showroom are new. Quatrine brand all-washable furniture. The remaining 30 percent comes in on consignment, with those items previewed before being placed on the sales floor.

"We like to preview the items for consistency," Doyle said, referring to consignment merchandise. "We pay as the item sells."

While consignment items can

be affordably priced for families, they are "not cheap" in terms of quality, emphasized the co-owners.

Hanec said designer furnishings are brought in from "model homes, the area's better homes... So it's not cheap."

Concurring was McCormick, who said the term consignment shouldn't - and doesn't - equate to cheaply made items.

"We got a lot of people who, if they buy a bedroom set bring their old bedroom set here to sell," Doyle said. "They're swapping."

So far, business has been brisk, with 75 percent of the

merchandise turning over since the store opened in January, Hanec said.

Among items on display during the reception were couches, tables, wall paintings and a Turkish rug, the latter tagged at \$400.

"We've got local artists doing hand-painted furniture and their items seem to fly right out," Doyle said.

The Downtown Farmington Center is south of Grand River about two blocks east of Farmington Road. Encore Design & Consign is next to the U.S. Postal Service retail store.

# OCC tapped for national honor

Oakland Community College was one of 10 colleges across the nation to win a Bellwether Finalist Award in the Workforce Development category at the 2000 Community Colleges Futures Assembly held in Orlando, Fla. through February.

The prestigious awards are conferred annually by the University of Florida's Institute of

Higher Education.

The Futures Assembly is an independent national policy forum which identifies critical and emergent issues confronting community colleges. The Bellwether Award (the term means "leader") is designed to recognize outstanding and innovative college programs.

OCC won for its presentation

on the 15-year partnership with the Dana Corporation which provides a customized Manufacturing Technology Associate Degree at OCC for Dana employees drawn from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Dana is the largest independent supplier of vehicle components in North America.

**Arthritis Today**  
JOSEPH J. WEISS, M.D.: RHEUMATOLOGY  
18829 Farmington Road  
Livonia, Michigan 48152  
Phone: (248) 478-7860

**HOW TO STOP ARTHRITIS DRUGS**

Much of arthritis, particularly rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis, involves inflammation of the cells that line the joint. In rheumatoid arthritis, the joints first affected are the finger and foot joints. In psoriatic arthritis, the knee joint is often severely inflamed.

The medical community does not know with certainty what sets this process in motion. We know that at times, the problem resolves to the point of remission, though why this reversal happens and who has arthritis and experience it is unclear.

If you are under drug treatment and your arthritis improves to a certain point, your doctor must make a decision. Are you improving because of your therapy, or are you doing well because your arthritis is leaving on its own?

The only way to determine the answer is to have you stop your medicine, and see what happens.

However, you cannot just stop taking your medications. The best way to determine if you need an arthritis drug is to decrease it in a slow fashion. If you are taking 6 milligrams a week, then your doctor will prescribe taking 5 a week, and observe the result. If you are taking 4 grams of salicylate a day, then the trial is to decrease to 3 a day.

You must avoid the temptation of just stopping the drug to see if you need it. The problem with it quick withdrawal is that you may learn in a painful way that you did indeed require that prescription. The virtue of going slow, if it is safely and certainly.

# Christopher from page A1

had not been home since Wednesday. He last attended school on Wednesday, Barrett said.

Officers responded to Troy Horton's telephone call only to find the body lying on the floor,

next to the victim's pickup truck - which officers found still running. The garage and home were thick with exhaust fumes, but, continued Nebus, a rope was found around Christopher's neck.

"It's a terrible tragedy for a family, for a father, to have to find that kind of situation," said Nebus.

The Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office, which conducted the autopsy, ruled that

the victim died "sometime during the p.m. hours on Wednesday," Nebus said. The teen was dead for a number of hours by the time he was found, according to the autopsy.

The examiner cited hanging as the cause of death and officially called it a suicide, although no note was found. Nebus added that the police investigation is not yet completed.

Barrett and Hickey said they were perplexed by the suicide.

"Who knows what goes on outside of school, with family or in any situation," Barrett said.

Besides parents Troy and Mary-Margaret, Christopher is survived by his brothers, Brenden and Nicholas; grandparents Diane and Chris Horton and Margaret and John Williams; 10 aunts and uncles and 15 cousins. He was the great-grandson of W.C. and Virginia Brownfield and Virginia Horton and the great-great-grandson of Leo Miller.

Visitation is at the Harry J. Will Funeral Home, 37000 Six Mile Road in Livonia, from 3-9 p.m. Sunday and 2-9 p.m. Monday.

The funeral is set for Tuesday at St. Gerald Catholic Church, 21600 Farmington Road. Christopher Horton's body will lie in state at the church from 10-11 a.m. with the Mass to follow at 11 a.m. Memorial donations may be made to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

**DENTISTRY**  
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by Herbert M. Gardner, D.D.S.  
**LASER TOOTH WHITENING**

The dentist can provide patients with office tooth whitening techniques that afford more safety and effectiveness than anything available in a drug store. Aside from using hydrogen peroxide solutions in higher concentrations, the dentist can also make use of lasers, which work quicker, better, and deeper than any other technique. Thus, the laser not only removes coffee and nicotine stains, but is also able to remove discoloration caused by antibiotics. When given to young children to fight infection, tetracycline can give teeth a deep gray-brown cast that is fairly resistant to regular tooth-whitening techniques. Laser tooth whitening uses the blue-light argon and heat-intense CO2 lasers to activate tooth-whitening catalysts ways no other

This column on laser tooth whitening has been brought to you in the interest of better dental health. Ask us today about ways to improve your smile. The goal of LIVONIA VILLAGE DENTAL ASSOCIATES is to provide the very best dental care possible for our patients so that each may achieve optimal dental health throughout their lifetime. We're located at 19171 Mesmerman Road, where our entire staff operates as a team. We take great pride in each staff member's training and capabilities. Trust your teeth to our experience and expertise. Call 478-2110 to schedule an appointment. Smiles are our business. We provide dentistry without fear - "weightless sleep."

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P.S. The dentist carefully shields the gums with a protective barrier before whitening a patient's teeth in a non-toxic office procedure.

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