

# TRI-CITY RECORD

121<sup>st</sup> Year Issue #15

April 14, 2005

Seventy-five Cents

## \$2.5 million loan approved for Watervliet water project

By Angela Stair

Congressman Fred Upton (R-St. Joseph) announced April 7 that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded the City of Watervliet a \$2.5 million loan under the Water and Waste Disposal Direct Loan Program.

"This is terrific news for the folks of Watervliet," Upton said. "This and other rural development programs provide much-needed assistance to our rural communities."

"Access to clean water is one of life's basic necessities and this loan will ensure that over 800 folks in Watervliet will have a new, upgraded water system," Upton continued. "The USDA loan will go a long way in directly improving the health and

safety needs of the Watervliet community as a whole."

The loan will help Watervliet replace an existing well that currently registers arsenic levels near the maximum contaminate level, as well as make additional improvements to the overall water distribution system.

"We greatly appreciate Congressman Upton's strong support of the City of Watervliet," City Manager Brian Dissette said. "The project will serve more than 800 customers."

Dissette added, "The project will include two new wells and rehabilitation of the existing 150,000-gallon elevated storage tank; to improve its appearance and structural integrity.

It will also include improvements to the water distribution system and provide adequate fire protection."

The mission of the USDA Rural Development Water and Waste Disposal Loan Program is to develop systems for water and waste disposal, including solid waste disposal and storm drainage in rural areas and towns with a population not in excess of 10,000.

Rural Development serves as the lead federal entity for rural development needs and administers program assistance through its rural housing, programs, rural business programs, and rural utilities programs.



50-YEAR MEMBER...George Vollrath, a resident of Coloma since he was 15, was honored April 7 for 50 years of membership with Coloma Masonic Lodge 162. From the left, District Deputy Raymond H. Hoge presents Vollrath with his 50-year pin. Worshipful Master Guy Elzroth and Treasurer Don Smith Sr. join in the congratulations.

Vollrath also served with the Berrien County Sheriff's Department from 1966 to 1991. Receiving a request to come out of retirement, he returned from 1997 until November 2004, when he retired as a Detective Lieutenant.

(Mary Brost Reck photo)

## Cops have leads WHS track equipment vandalized

By Angela Stair

Watervliet High School track equipment was vandalized on the weekend of April 2-3. Several thousand dollars worth of equipment was ruined.

Ron Farac, head football and track coach, said that vandals smashed 17 hurdles and damaged the brand-new pole vault landing pads. The value of the equipment will run into several thousand dollars, he said. The hurdles alone cost \$80-\$85 apiece, he said.

The pole vault landing pads were brand new. Coach Farac said the foam pads, used to cushion the landing of students that pole vault, are covered with a protective cover to keep them dry in case of rain. He said they had deep gashes in them that will cause problems now.

This Saturday, Watervliet High School will have 34 teams coming to compete for the 33<sup>rd</sup> year. Farac said they hope to be fully functional by then, although he did not think they would be able to pole vault.

Watervliet City Police Department is investigating, Coach Farac said. They have some names and leads they are following. They know how the hurdles were broken and what was used to cause the damage. The incident is under investigation.

## Watervliet man arrested

### Pot seized

Michigan State Police troopers Williams, Guild, Janes and Schoonveld seized approximately 30 pounds of marijuana on a traffic stop Monday, April 11, at 9:15 p.m. on Coloma Road, near I-96, in Hagar Township.

A routine traffic stop for defective equipment yielded 28 one-pound bricks of compressed marijuana sealed in brown packaging tape.

A 27-year-old Watervliet man was arrested for Delivery/Manufacture Marijuana 5-45 kg. for the incident.

## \$249,000 grant to Watervliet will stimulate multi-use project at former lumberyard site and improvements at automobile dealership

By Angela Stair

On April 13, Michigan Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced that the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) made a Community Development Block Grant of \$249,000 available to the City of Watervliet.

"The planned improvements along Main Street will be a catalyst for new growth and bring new jobs to Watervliet," said Granholm. "Investing in our community cores will create cool cities throughout Michigan."

Watervliet City Manager Brian Dissette said the \$249,000 is actually two grants that had been applied for. One grant of \$174,000 will be used to redevelop Judd Lumber site destroyed by fire on Main Street. The second grant of \$75,000 will be used to assist Brookfield Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep with its expansion plans.

The grants will fund two projects in the City of Watervliet that will create 15 new jobs and bring more than \$5.7 million in private investment into the City.

Developer Dale R. McBride will be redeveloping the site of the former Judd Lumber property located on Main Street. Along with the \$174,000 grant the City received, McBride plans to invest more than \$5.6 million to construct a mixed-

use building and additional property upgrades that will include a publicly-owned parking lot, sidewalks, lighting, and fencing to protect pedestrians from the nearby CSX railway tracks.

The City and the Watervliet DDA will provide an additional \$19,400 for engineering costs.

Along with the \$75,000 grant, Brookfield will invest \$50,000 in the expansion of Brookfield Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep. The project includes relocating several power-line poles located at the dealership, extending downtown lights, and enhanced landscaping around the site.

The City of Watervliet and the DDA will provide an additional \$10,000 for engineering and administrative costs.

Watervliet Mayor Glenn Openner stated: "We're thrilled to see these developments occurring within downtown Watervliet. Brookfield Dodge has been a longtime Main Street business and, as part of this project, that dealership will become an even greater success."

The Mayor went on to say, "In addition, Dale McBride's history with Watervliet totals more than 20 years. Throughout those years, Dale has been committed to quality development. We are very happy to welcome both of these projects to the community."



DEVELOPERS DALE AND BARBARA McBRIDE (left) were on hand Wednesday morning when the check for \$249,000 was delivered to Watervliet City Hall. Also pictured are DDA Chairman Tim Freeburn, Kara Wood of MEDC, and Watervliet Mayor Glenn "Corky" Openner Jr.

## Proposed 48-unit senior housing project "on" again, but not in City of Watervliet

By Angela Stair

Stephen K. Werth of Werth Development LLC came to the April 12 Watervliet City Commission meeting to speak of the 48-unit senior housing project that was thought to have become a dead issue last September. Werth said they would be building it in the Township, just outside the City Limits and near Community Hospital.

In early 2002, Werth Development announced the \$2.5 million 48-unit senior housing project, contingent on the donation of the land. The County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, owner of the paper mill site, donated the acreage needed, with frontage on Mill Creek.

A total of three different sites had been donated. The last site next to Brookfield Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep was found, after an engineering survey, to need more money to develop than they were willing to invest in the property.

Last September, City Manager Brian Dissette told the Downtown Development Authority that the project was "dead." He said that anytime there is waterfront involved, there are increased costs.

Werth told the Commission that the project is now slated to be constructed near Community Hospital and would be accessed from Medical Park Drive. He said he needed to know if the City would be able to provide water to the project.

Commissioner Jeff Weber voiced the concern of the Parks, Buildings, Grounds & Streets Committee about the effects which may occur during construction and the long-term

impact it might have on the roadway.

Werth said the company would put up a bond or whatever was necessary.

See HOUSING cont. on Pg. 12

## Randall Park to be closed for repairs

By Lisa Houart

At the April 11, Monday evening, meeting, Coloma City Commission approved a proposal to close Randall Park for a day so that repairs can be done at the park.

Shutdown of the park will be scheduled for sometime next week.

The Department of Public Works, along with several volunteers, will be taking out the old mulch and replacing it with much-needed new mulch. Commissioner Marsha Fishburn said signs would be placed at the park to let visitors know when the park will be closed.

Composite Soil Tech, from Zeeland, Michigan, will be hauling in a semi-truckload of Play Safe Mulch for the replacement. The cost of the mulch is \$12 per yard, which includes the delivery fee. The Randall Park Committee has agreed to pay the

cost.

A bid was accepted from Best Way Disposal of Watervliet to bring two portable toilets into the park for the season at a cost of \$150 per month.

Randall Park is a very popular place for people to gather and have fun.

Commissioner Sue Dahlquist commented, "On a nice day, you can't find a place to park it's so busy."

### Inspection of water tower approved

A bid in the amount of \$2,690 was accepted from Liquid Engineering Corporation to inspect the City water tower and clean it. For an additional cost of \$250, Liquid Engineering Corporation will also be using a sonic testing device to check the thickness of the steel and will be checking a potential rust spot in the bottom of the tower. If the rust spot must be repaired, it will be at a cost of \$350 per hour and the spot will be sealed with a localized epoxy coating.

### Department of Public Works to get new phones

A bid for the amount of \$813 from H.E.I. Wireless was accepted by the Commission to purchase two new phones and four batteries for the Department of Public Works employees.

### Truck #5 will get new seat

A bid from Dick's Auto Parts in Middlebury, Indiana, for \$550, was accepted by the Commission to purchase a new seat for Department of Public Works' truck #5, a 1995 Ford. The seat needs to be replaced because of broken springs.

## Parental concerns at High School level

# Science Olympiad students recognized at Coloma School Board meeting

By Wanda Thomas

A large number of Coloma students was present at the regular meeting of the Coloma Community Schools Board of Education on April 11.

The students were members of the High School, Junior High and Middle School Science Olympiad teams who competed at Lake Michigan College on March 16 against other area schools.

According to Junior High and Middle School Science Olympiad Coach Kathy Nadeau, Junior High and High School teams took first-place honors, which qualified both groups for state competition. The Middle School team placed third.

Calling the students "a fantastic bunch of kids," Nadeau told the Board, "I expect a lot. These kids deliver. They worked hard on this. I am so proud of them."

The Junior High team will travel with Nadeau to Michigan State University on April 30 to participate in the state competition.

At the High School level, a decision was made not to attend state competition because of a conflict with

Coloma's Junior-Senior Prom.

Several parents in attendance voiced concern and disappointment over the decision that was made by the High School team's coach, without their prior knowledge.

Parent Jim Pomeroy called the situation a tragedy. "These students won the right to attend. For some, it's a once-in-a-lifetime chance and they are going to miss it. We want a system of checks and balances put into place so this can not happen again."

Pomeroy praised Superintendent of Schools Terry Boguth for immediately trying to rectify the situation as soon as it was brought to her attention by a parent. However, the decision proved to be irreversible.

Board President Lynn Reinhardt said he was sorry that the situation had happened and assured the crowd of concerned parents that it would be checked into to avoid the situation from occurring again.

### Teachers recognized

In further business, special recognition was given to Coloma teachers Sharon Ball, Rashonda Radom, Alice Mow, Kathy Osborne, and

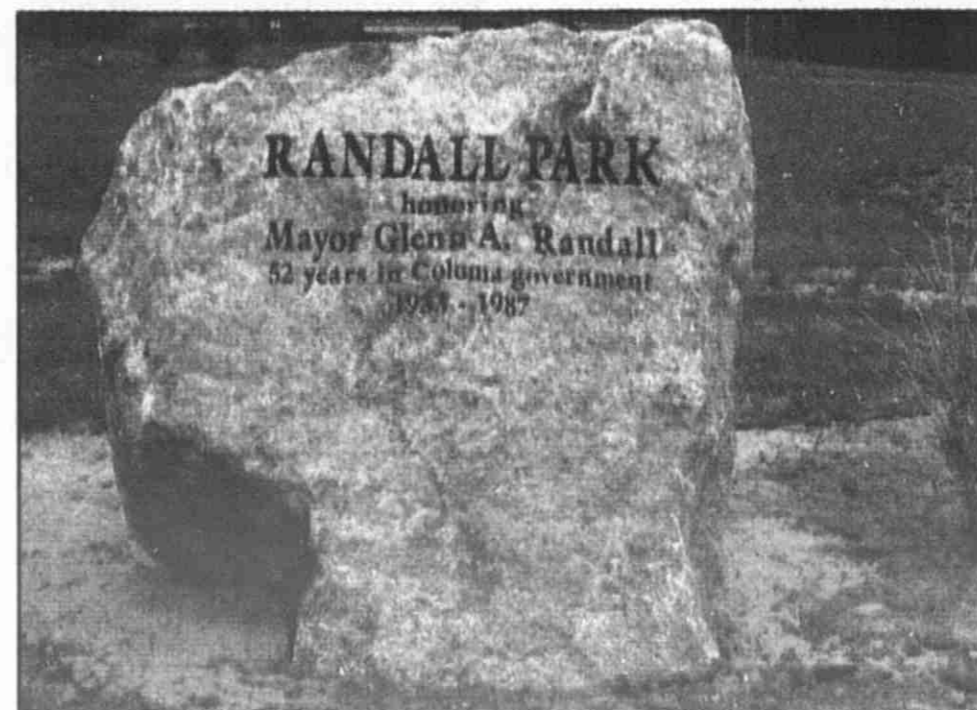
Kathy Kniebes for their expertise and hard work in the development of the Berrien/Cass County Math Curriculum.

### Fast ForWord update

An update on the successful Fast ForWord computer reading program that began on Feb. 22 was presented to the Board by teacher Karen Nickels. Approximately 230 students are using the program during the course of a day in 50-minute sessions. Progress is being seen by students, teachers, and parents.

### Junior High proposes pilot program

In response to pending High School reform, Junior High Principal Peter Olsen and counselor Pat Goodman discussed a proposed pilot program for Junior High students that would incorporate a tri-semester block during the freshman year instead of the traditional two semesters. This system would allow for three 12-week periods, with new classes offered during each semester. Although the amount of days per class would be See COLOMA cont. on Pg. 12



A STONE HONORING FORMER MAYOR GLENN A. RANDALL... was recently placed in Coloma's Randall Park. The park will be closed for repairs sometime next week.

(Lisa Houart photo)











## WBA discusses July 4th plans; seeks chairman

By Angela Stair

The Watervliet Business Association (WBA) met on Thursday, April 7, to discuss plans for the July 4 celebration.

Two vital dates were set at the meeting. City Manager Brian Dissette said. The fireworks will be held on July 4 and the parade will be held on Saturday, July 2.

Dissette said they are just beginning to work on the entertainment for the 4th of July weekend and could use a little help. The WBA is looking for some new members and would like you to contact any of its members if you have some free time and would like to help out.

The WBA is working without a Chairman at this time, Dissette said; and the Association has been considering the hiring of a part-time coordinator for the project. Dissette said that if anyone is interested in the position of coordinator, or would like to become a member, please contact him at City Hall, (269) 463-6769.

## Van Buren Regional Genealogical Society meeting April 25

Sue Sanders of Plainwell will be the featured speaker at the Monday, April 25, meeting of Van Buren Regional Genealogical Society. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at Webster Memorial Library in Decatur.

Mrs. Sanders will be speaking on "Land Records 101." She will include where to find land records, what can be found in land records, and how to go about researching land records. She will also be speaking on researching deeds and what can be found in them.

Sanders is a retired teacher from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. She has been doing genealogical research for about 30 years and has been fascinated by what you can learn from land records and land deeds.

The public is invited and encouraged to come, share your family history with us, and to profit from the presentation.

For more information, call Toni I. Benson at (269) 423-4771.

## It's time to enter the "Best Mom" contest!

For the 19th year, the Tri-City Record is sponsoring its "Best Mom" contest for Mother's Day, May 8.

On that day, a mother, grandmother, stepmother or best friend will receive a dozen red roses and dozens of gifts from area merchants as the "Best Mom" of 2005.

Selection of "Best Mom" is made by the staff of the Tri-City Record, based on the contents of a nominating letter submitted on behalf of the candidate.

To enter that special lady in your life in the "Best Mom" competition, simply write a letter to the Editor of the Record. In 100 words or less, tell why she deserves to win the "Best Mom" title. Sign the letter and give your address and telephone number (don't forget Mom's name).

Deadline for the letter entry is Friday, May 6, at 12:00 noon. The "Best Mom" letter writer will be notified that day and the "Best Mom" will receive her red roses on Sunday, Mother's Day. Her picture and the nominating letter will appear in the May 12 edition of the Record.

All letters submitted for consideration will appear in the Record, as space allows, up to and after Mother's Day. Previous letter writers may enter new letters!



**STRUCTURE FIRE...**The Watervliet Fire Department was dispatched to this structure fire on Sunday afternoon, April 10, at 7256 Red Arrow Highway at approximately 7:56 p.m. Fire Chief Tom Adams was advised by the owner of the property that they were trying to clean up the yard and had a brush pile burning, when the wind blew some embers into a nearby storage barn and ignited the barn. The barn was fully involved when the Fire Department arrived. The Watervliet Fire Department was assisted by the Coloma Fire Department and was on the scene for approximately 3½ hours.

## Hartford Chamber News: getting promotional brochure ready, making Summer Festival plans

Submitted by Ed Holland

The Hartford Chamber of Commerce encourages everyone to take some time to look around your business and try to clean up, fix up, paint or do whatever it takes to make your place of business look enticing to your customers. A little elbow grease goes a long way.

If you need to paint or do a little remodeling on the façade of your building, we may have some money available for you to use. If you qualify, this is free-free-free money.

To qualify, your building must be in the downtown development area. If you have a need, or if you have a question, call me at (269) 621-0997.

### NEW EATING PLACE

We have a new eating place in the city. Ed, from E & D Movie Rental, has a kitchen in his building and now serves pizza, ribs, and chicken. They are great.

Ed has a new pressure cooker that cooks the ribs to perfection, hickory smoked; but if you don't care for the barbecue sauce, they will make a sauce so you can use your own to satisfy your taste. They also have Broasted Chicken. In my opinion, Broasted Chicken is the only way to go. You can buy chicken by the piece, dinner, or bucket and the slab. Rib tips are also available.

The pizzas are made from scratch and are available in 6", 10", 12", 14" and 16" sizes.

When they first opened, there were some problems with the ovens. They called in the manufacturer's representative to solve the problems. So, just in case you were not 100% satisfied with your purchase of the pizzas, please give them another try... they are getting better all the time. I know pizzas and I'm asking you to give his pizzas a try. Enjoy all of your favorite toppings.

Delivery service is available, with MasterCard and Visa accepted.

### PROMOTIONAL BROCHURE

The Chamber is in the process of putting together a tri-fold brochure

that will be available very soon. It highlights some of the Chamber of Commerce benefits, lists our Chamber members, and will be a very good promotional item for our members.

### AFTER HOURS EVENT

APRIL 19

Don't forget our After Hours Event at Rick's Tack and Supply Shop on Tuesday, April 19, in its new location at 100 60th Avenue (south of town, around the corner from the car wash, south of I-94)

Coffee, punch, and cookies will be served from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Rick's Tack and Supply Shop will have a special sale that day that will extend to the After Hours Event.

Come and see this new shop while you visit the owners and other Chamber business members.

### PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE MAY 18

The Hartford Chamber of Commerce will host a local area-wide Professional Business Conference from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Lawrence Conference Center, Lawrence. Margaret Adams, from the Cornerstone Alliance Center in Benton Harbor, will be guest speaker. She will share business resources for all business owners, with special emphasis geared toward women in business.

This is an incredible opportunity to meet other local business owners; pass out business cards and brochures; as well as set up a table to display business services, demos and product samples.

Dinner will be catered by Keeler Keg. The menu will include fresh fruit, salad, seafood pasta, homemade carrot cake, and more. The cost is \$7 per dinner ticket (includes the cost of a table display space for your business). Student tickets may be purchased for \$6.

Please respond by May 1, 2005, to ensure your dinner reservation and/or table space.

For reservations or information,

contact Natalie Rios, Chamber Secretary, at (269) 621-1006.

### SUMMER FESTIVAL

The Summer Festival (formerly known as the Strawberry Festival) is fast approaching in June. This event is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, with only a few dedicated workers. Please consider giving a hand toward making the festival a success - we need your help. For more information on how you can help out, please call (269) 621-0997; or Natalie Rios at (269) 621-1006.

## COLOMA

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shortened, classes would all be lengthened daily in time.

Advantages to a block schedule include less wasted time due to longer class periods; students would be able to fit more class variety into their schedules; and, if a student failed a class, the class would usually be available to retake immediately rather than forcing the student to wait until the next school year to repeat the class.

Another proposal presented for the Board to consider is a possible three-week summer school for probable eighth-grade retention students. Small groups of students would concentrate on academics, with the intent of bringing a failing eighth-grade student to a level where that student could be placed into ninth grade for the upcoming school year instead of repeating eighth grade. There would be a fee to attend the program.

### Armstrong yellow wristband fund-raiser

Business Manager Terry Barella reported that Coloma Community Schools, in cooperation with Chartwells' Food Service Management Company, was launching an *Eat. Learn. Live.* campaign.

According to a press release, this program is intended to recharge the school's continuing commitment to serve nutritious food to Coloma's children and young adults and educate students on the value and importance of eating healthy for a healthy life.

To promote the rollout of *Eat. Learn. Live.*, Chartwells' is raising funds in support of the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Chartwells' purchased, then contributed, several thousand of the famous yellow LIVESTRONG wristbands to local fund-raising efforts. Anyone matching Chartwells' donation of \$1 or more will receive one of the popular wristbands.

Donations will be accepted at all Coloma Community Schools cafeterias from April 19 through April 22,

during normal food service hours, while the wristband supply lasts. The wristbands are available in youth and adult sizes.

### Teachers hired

Additional Board business included approving a contract with Lauren Andrews for the remainder of the 2004-2005 school year, filling the position that Karen Nickels had before the Fast ForWord program was implemented.

A contract was also approved with Cari Miller for the 2005-2006 school year as music teacher at Washington Elementary.

Superintendent Boguth announced that the adult education graduation would be held May 26 in the Watervliet High School Auditorium.

Financially, Boguth reported that the school system is currently in good shape for the year and that the budget is on target.

### "Public Comment"

Resident Rick Martin and teacher Harold Bragg addressed the Board during its "Public Comment" time.

Martin questioned the employee review process and also requested the Board to consider the possibility of merging the Coloma and Watervliet School districts in the future.

Bragg suggested setting higher standards for students attending Coloma Community Schools, pushing for academic excellence and scrutinizing admissions.

## HOUSING

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sary. He said they would resurface the road after the construction, if that were necessary.

Commissioner Duane Cobb told Werth that the City had spent thousands of dollars trying to make this project work within the City Limits, and it went nowhere. He said the City would not spend anymore on the project until they were a lot farther along with its construction.

Werth said he understood and was not asking them to but, before the project could continue, they had to be sure they could get water.

Cobb said he did not see a problem getting water to the development, but no engineering dollars would be spent until they were ready to pour concrete on the project.

Weber asked if local contractors were going to get a chance to work on the project.

Werth said the work would go out for bids. He said the low bid gets the contract; it is not a decision made by preference.

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