

Band night set in Girard

GIRARD

Girard High School will host its first Band Night at 7 p.m. Thursday at Arrowhead Stadium. The high school bands performing will be Western Reserve, Ursuline, Brookfield and the Girard Marching Band.

Organizers hope the event will take place annually.

YMCA expansion to be dedicated

BOARDMAN

The D.D. & Velma Davis Family YMCA will dedicate the expansion to its facility at 10:30 a.m. Friday.

The \$6 million project added 30,000 square feet of space that houses a youth fitness and recreation center, multi-purpose gymnasium, expanded free-weight room, group fitness studio, meeting rooms, permanent preschool rooms, art studio and more.

The expansion increases the Davis Branch to nearly 100,000 square feet.

Fall fish sale planned in Cortland

CORTLAND

The Trumbull Soil and Water Conservation District will have its annual fall fish sale at 2 p.m. Sept. 21 at the Mosquito Lake parking area off of West Main Street. Orders will be taken until Sept. 17 by filling out an order form at the SWCD office, 520 West Main Street.

White amurs, also known as grass carp, are for sale. They are used for pond vegetation control; however it is not considered an adequate control for filamentous algae. White amur cost \$15 each and are nine to 13 inches long.

Pond owners in Pennsylvania need to obtain a permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and provide a copy for review at pickup. For more information call 330-637-2056, ext. 111.

Probate seminar planned in Warren

WARREN

Trumbull County Probate Judge Thomas A. Swift will present the 30th annual Probate Practice Seminar at St. Demetrios Community Center, 3223 Atlantic Street NE, Oct. 1. Registration will begin at 7:45 a.m.

Among those speaking will be Ohio Supreme Court justices Maureen O'Connor and Judith A. Lanzinger and Trumbull County Prosecutor Dennis Watkins, speaking on "Famous Forensic Cases of Trumbull County." For more information call 330-675-2521.

Agenda Wednesday

♦ **Western Reserve Joint Fire District trustees**, 7 p.m., Poland Township Government Building, Dobbins Road.

♦ **Lowellville Village Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 140 E. Liberty St.

♦ **Springfield Township Trustees**, 8 p.m., Springfield Township Administration Building, 3475 E. South Range Road, New Springfield.

♦ **Mahoning Unlimited Classroom Board of Directors**, 8 a.m., Mahoning County Educational Service Center Conference Room C2, 2nd floor, 100 DeBartolo Place, Boardman.

♦ **Western Reserve Joint Fire District**, 7 p.m., Poland Township Government Center, Dobbins Road.

♦ **Eagle Joint Fire District**, 7 p.m., fire station, 33 W. Liberty St., Hubbard.

♦ **Mercer County Housing Authority Board**, 11 a.m., Mercer County Housing Authority, 80 Jefferson Ave., Sharon, Pa.

♦ **Struthers City Council**, caucus, 6:15 p.m., regular meeting, 7 p.m., council chambers.

♦ **Beaver Local school board**, 6:30 p.m., high school media center, 13187 state Route 7, Lisbon.

AGENDA runs daily. Items for the column should be sent to The Vindicator Regional Desk at least two days in advance.

US rep to attend Urban League event

By ELISE MCKEOWN SKOLNICK
news@vindy.com

LIBERTY

The majority whip of the U.S. House of Representatives will attend the Greater Warren-Youngstown Urban League's annual dinner.

U.S. Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina, the No. 3 ranking Democrat in the House, will speak at the dinner Thursday at the MetroPlex Conference Center. A reception will

be at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m.

The dinner is the League's annual fundraiser, said Thomas Conley, league president. Money raised is used to benefit its programs.

"That is one of the main purposes," Conley said. "And the other is to bring notable speakers in that can bring a message to our area and, of



Clyburn

course, [Clyburn] is one."

Past speakers include Judge Greg Mathis and Martin Luther King III.

Noting that the area is economically depressed, Conley said Mahoning Valley residents need to hear what's being done in the nation's Capitol to create jobs.

Education also is a major issue for the area, he said.

"I'm sure the message that he has, bringing information from [Washington,] DC, from Capitol Hill to us, as to what's going on; that would be

a message in itself we need to hear," Conley said.

This year's dinner marks the 80th anniversary of the League's existence in the Mahoning Valley.

"It's a nice time out," Conley said. "We have live music. It's just a first-class event."

On average, 500 people attend the annual dinner.

Tickets are \$55. To reserve tickets, or for information, call 330-394-4316 or 330-259-9049.



THE VINDICATOR

Mark Gwathmey suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after serving as a master sergeant in the Marine Corps. He received a service dog, Larry, through Vets Helping Heroes, a nonprofit organization founded by a Youngstown native.

Dogs are heroes to heroes

By KRISTINE GILL
kgill@vindy.com

YOUNGSTOWN

MARK GWATHMEY used to wake at 3 a.m. and stand over his wife, telling her to keep quiet. There were bombs going off and people outside the house.

Sometimes he'd walk the halls of his home with a gun looking for signs of the enemy.

But Mark wasn't in Iraq anymore.

He was safe at home in Upper Marlboro, Md. And he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after three tours of duty as a master sergeant for the Marine Corps in the war on terror.

"I was almost to the breaking point of suicide," Gwathmey said. "I thought I was crazy."

It took two years before doctors determined that Gwathmey, 40, was suffering from a traumatic brain injury. Years of exposure to bombings and mortars had left him suf-

fering from daily seizures and difficulty speaking, in addition to PTSD.

"As much love as I could give my husband, it wasn't enough," said his wife, CeCe. "He still felt so alone."

Gwathmey experienced stress fractures in his feet and ankles while overseas, but didn't stop to seek treatment until returning home from the war. He now suffers from reflex sympathetic dystrophy that sends constant shooting pains through the nerves in his foot. His wife had to dissuade him from amputation, having been told that the surgery does little to relieve the pain. Gwathmey now walks with a cane.

CeCe Gwathmey had read about trained dogs that could learn to detect impending seizures in humans. She looked into buying one, but trained service dogs cost \$35,000 to \$70,000, and many organizations had waiting lists of up to five years.

"I thought, we can't af-



ROBERT K. YOSAY | THE VINDICATOR

Youngstown native and World War II veteran Irwin Stovroff started Vets Helping Heroes, a program that raises money to train service dogs for veterans in need. Stovroff often is accompanied by his dog, Cash, the canine promoter for the organization.

ford that," she said. "And we can't afford to wait that long."

That's when he saw a flier for Vets Helping Heroes, an organization based in Boca Raton, Fla., and run by World War II veteran Irwin Stovroff. The nonprofit program could provide Gwathmey

with the service dog he needed — at no cost.

Stovroff, 88, grew up in Buffalo, N.Y., but raised his family in Youngstown, working for Thomasville furniture. He survived as a prisoner of war, but realized not all vets were

See HEROES, A6

Austintown elementary schools get new principals

Tim Kelty takes the reins at Woodside school

By KRISTINE GILL
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AUSTINTOWN

After five years as assistant principal of Fitch High School, Tim Kelty is headed back to kindergarten.

The Youngstown State University graduate and Austintown native is the new principal of Woodside Elementary School.

Kelty, 43, is filling the position previously held by Carole Sutton, who is now director of special services for Austintown schools.

Kelty coached football and baseball at Fitch while working toward his undergraduate degree in health and physical education at YSU and maintained that position after graduating. Working with athletes gave him the opportunity to bond with kids.

"I love building relationships with kids," Kelty said. "If you can connect with a kid, you can see it in their face."

His work as a coach also gave him his team mentality. Kelty would rather talk about his colleagues than himself.

"The Austintown staff genuinely cares



THE AUSTINTOWN STAFF GENUINELY CARES ABOUT INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS. THEY'RE GREAT PEOPLE."



TIM KELTY,
Woodside Elementary

about individual students," he said. "They're great people."

Kelty served in Operation Desert Storm for one year before returning to YSU to renew his teaching certificate, this time in the administration field. He has three children age 13, 9 and 3.

He's only been on the job for a few days, but Kelty already has observed the stark differences between high-school and elementary school students.

"High-school kids now are very independent, very resourceful," Kelty said. "We have elementary school kids that come in, and you sometimes have to tie shoes and teach them letters. They're at the very beginning."

See KELTY, A5

Watson school will be headed by Sheila Palombo

By KRISTINE GILL
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AUSTINTOWN

Sheila Palombo is no stranger to Austintown schools. She's worked in the district for the past 14 years, first as a teacher, then as a math coach and now as principal of Watson Elementary School.

"Austintown is just an awesome district," Palombo said. "I get to now give back what the district gave to me. It's a real team and a family."

Her familiarity with the staff and ability to work easily with children made the transition to her new position a smooth one. Jim Carchedi, who retired as principal after 17 years, stayed through the month of June to show Palombo the



I GET TO NOW GIVE BACK WHAT THE DISTRICT GAVE TO ME. IT'S A REAL TEAM AND A FAMILY."



SHEILA PALOMBO,
Watson Elementary

ropes.

Palombo did her student teaching at Watson after graduating from Youngstown State University with her master's degree in early childhood education. Her career has

See PALOMBO, A5

MERGER

Continued from A3

the two divisions together allowing us to blend staff strengths and knowledge, and to share best practices that support our mission,” said Pincock, who is in the process of selecting a team of senior staff who will work to complete the transition into a new division.

“Above all else, we expect that the communities we serve will soon realize the benefits of this merger – especially access to more resources and training,” he said.

Separately, Ohio and Pennsylvania were the smallest divisions in the country and two of only five divisions that were made up of single states. The combined East Central Division will serve a population of nearly 24 million, making it the seventh-largest of the American Cancer Society’s 12 divisions, said Al Stabilito, Northeast Ohio public relations director.

“This will make us a stronger, more effective organization,” said Pincock. “It will also ensure that every dollar donated makes the most impact in the fight

against cancer.”

“With the strengths of the two divisions merged we will be better able to provides services to cancer patients and their families and caregivers and to increase research,” said Donald Jay Bice of Bazetta Township, a member of the new Eastern Division Board.

Bice, chairman of the former Ohio Division, admitted he was at first skeptical about the possibility of a merger. But after putting together a committee to investigate the idea came to think it would make a stronger unit.

“We made sure we provided for lower echelon employees and, at the upper level, no one got hurt. Before the merger, the Ohio Division had gotten as lean as possible. It was the proper thing to do at the time,” Bice said.

The idea of a merger between Ohio and Pennsylvania has been in the works since the downturn in the economy a couple of years ago, Dr. Brodell said.

“We started to think if we are going to move forward in our mission, we needed to look at every penny spent. We’re excited. We think it’s all good,” he said.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

Ohio & Pennsylvania divisions merge

The new American Cancer Society East Central Division officers and board of directors, made up of volunteers from both states, includes three area residents.

◆ **Dr. Robert T. Brodell**, Warren, is secretary of the board. He is a member of the ACS National Board of Directors; and was a member of the now defunct Ohio Division Board of Directors, and is chairman emeritus of ACS’s Warren Relay for Life.

◆ **Dr. M. Joyce Dienger**, Cincinnati, is president of the board

◆ **Gary Olson**, Stroudsburg, Pa., is its chairman.

Other area East Central Divisions board members are:

◆ **Gary Allison**, New Castle, Pa.

◆ **Donald Jay Bice**, Bazetta Township, Trumbull County.

◆ **Thenice Powers Gall**, North Canton.

◆ **David Graham**, Wooster.

◆ **William W. Harding**, New Philadelphia.

◆ **Dr. Eric J. Lichtenberger**, Akron.

◆ **Barbara J. Wilinski**, Steubenville.

Source: American Cancer Society East Central Division.

HEROES

Continued from A3

so lucky.

“I decided I wanted to help those who weren’t as fortunate,” he said.

He began Vets Helping Heroes in 2006, when he found out that the government does not have funds set aside for providing service dogs to disabled veterans.

Carl Henderson, regional director in the office of public affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs, said that though the government will cover veterinary care for a veteran’s service dog, there is no money set aside for training of the dogs.

“The organizations to which [Veterans Affairs] refers veterans needing guide or service dogs are not affiliated or funded by VA,” Henderson wrote.

Stovroff’s program is affiliated with a dog-training facility in Smithstown, N.Y., called America’s Vet Dogs. Stovroff helps raise \$50,000 per veteran which goes toward the training of a service dog, its food and veterinary care. After about seven to 10 years of service, a dog is retired and Vets Helping Heroes will fund the training of the veteran’s next dog.

In its first four years, Vets Helping Heroes has provided more than 35 veterans with service dogs. America’s Vet Dogs has placed more than 150 dogs, including the ones Stovroff’s organization helped pay for. There are now 220 people on America’s Vet Dogs waiting list.

The organization gained national recognition with help from Stovroff’s partner, Doris Tamarkin. Tamarkin’s nephew who works as a producer, was able to land Stovroff an on-air interview with Fox News. The donations flooded in after that.

Stovroff and the organization’s mascot dog, Cash, have since appeared on the “Bonnie Hunt” show, and their interview with “Inside Edition” will air in October.

Stovroff said he has received donations from people in all 50 states, and no donation is too small.

HOW TO HELP

Vets Helping Heroes

You can donate to Irwin Stovroff’s organization by phone or by mail. Send donations to:

Vets Helping Heroes
ATTN: Irwin Stovroff
7374 Woodmont Court
Boca Raton, FL, 33434

or:

Irwin Stovroff
16 Walker Circle
Girard, OH 44420

Call 561-488-6155 or 561-251-9296 to make a donation by phone. Vets Helping Heroes is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation and donations are tax-deductible.

For more information visit www.vetshelpingheroes.org

“This program for our young vets coming back depends on private donations,” Stovroff said.

After four months of visits with doctors and training staff, Gwathmey was deemed a suitable candidate for a service dog and paired with Larry, an English lab and golden retriever mix who will turn five Dec. 1.

“Larry has brought me out of that low slump,” he said. “I can stand with my back to people and know Larry will be watching.”

Larry can predict when Gwathmey will have a seizure. He whines to tell him a minor seizure is coming and barks when it’s a major one. Those cues tell Gwathmey to stop what he’s doing and find a safe place to rest until the episode passes.

Larry also provides physical support when he wears his harness, which helps Gwathmey walk without his cane. Larry can retrieve dropped items and has helped Gwathmey cope with the stress and uneasiness associated with PTSD. “Everyone who sees Larry says, ‘Aw, the military gave that to you,’” CeCe Gwathmey said. “But the military had nothing to do with it. This was entirely through a private charity organization.”

She said they are forever indebted to Stovroff.

“This gave Mark his life back,” she said.

YSU seeks strategic plan

Staff report

YOUNGSTOWN

There are several opportunities for people to provide input into a plan aimed at leading Youngstown State University to 2020.

The goal is to have the strategic plan to the board of trustees for approval by the end of this year.

Ikram Khawaja, provost and vice president of academic affairs, and Eugene Grilli, vice president of administration and finance, are chairmen of the strategic planning committee.

The 40-plus-member committee includes representatives from the faculty, staff, students and the community who began meeting in July.

Members are divided into four subcommittees, or cornerstones, of the plan: student success, accountability and sustainability, urban-research transition and regional impact.

Input is being sought about those cornerstones.

Anonymous comments to focus-group questions may be posted at http://web.ysu.edu/contentm/easy_

pages/view.php?page_id=199&sid=25&menu_id=480

People may attend focus group sessions for each of YSU’s six colleges:

◆ College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, in the Jones Room of Kilcawley Center.

◆ Bitonte College of Health and Human Services, 3 p.m. Monday, Cushwa Hall 3112.

◆ College of Fine and Performing Arts, 3 p.m., Monday, Bliss Hall 1220.

◆ Williamson College of

Business Administration, 4 p.m. next Tuesday, Williamson 3415.

◆ Beeghly College of Education, 3 p.m., Sept. 15, Beeghly College 1302.

◆ College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, 3 p.m. Sept. 16, Moser 2400.

Public comments also may be made using Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/YSU2020Plan>) or Facebook.

More information is available at <http://web.ysu.edu/2020strategicplan>.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden runs while taking part in a Labor Day parade Monday in Toledo.

Biden revs up Dems in Ohio

Associated Press

TOLEDO

Democrats facing plenty of anger over the nation’s economic hard times along with troubling poll numbers called in Vice President Joe Biden to energize party loyalists at a Labor Day parade Monday.

Biden spent the holiday in this prized swing-voting state with Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, who is facing an uphill re-election bid just two years after Democrats here helped elect President Barack Obama and seemed positioned to lock up political control.

The vice president dashed along the downtown parade route, shaking hands and hugging supporters, many of them wearing shirts with the names of local candidates.

He seemed to energize

the crowd, smiling most of the way.

“Beautiful dog,” he shouted to a man sitting with a yellow Labrador.

Biden didn’t make any public remarks during his hour-long appearance before flying home to spend time with his family.

Democrats hope he delivered some much needed enthusiasm. Strickland acknowledged they face a challenging climate.

A poll released Sunday by *The Columbus Dispatch* said Republican candidates have double-digit leads in the races for governor and U.S. Senate.

“I think I’m down,” Strickland said. “I don’t think I’m down by 12 points.”

Still, he said he’s confident he’ll win with his campaign strategy to get out early voters and frequent visits from

Biden and Obama. The president will be in Cleveland Wednesday to talk about research and development tax credits for businesses.

“I hope both of them come back often,” Strickland said, denying any suggestion that wavering support for the president could hurt his campaign.

He said he expects Biden to be back in the state at least three times before the November election. He was just in Toledo two weeks ago, telling workers at a Jeep assembly plant that the Obama administration’s bailout of the U.S. auto industry had saved thousands of jobs.

Republican Rich Iott, a businessman who is challenging longtime U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur in Toledo, blamed the Democrats for slowing the economy.

“Those who run big and small businesses are not hiring because they are uncertain about what Washington is going to do next to either tax or regulate their business or industry,” he said.

Dennis Duffer, a member of the local bricklayers union who marched in Monday’s parade, said there seems to be less interest in the election this time around compared with two years ago when Obama was on his way to become the nation’s first black president.

“This is just not as dramatic,” he said, adding that anyone in office is in trouble this year.

“People are looking for someone who turn the country around. They just want someone with a plan.”

Little Rock 9 member Thomas dead at 68

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Jefferson Thomas, who as a teenager was among nine black students to integrate a Little Rock high school in the nation’s first major battle over school segregation, has died. He was 68.

Thomas died Sunday in Ohio of pancreatic cancer, according to a statement from Carlotta Walls LaNier, who also enrolled at Central High School in 1957 and is president of the Little Rock Nine Foundation.

The integration fight was a first real test of the federal government’s resolve to enforce a 1954 Supreme Court order outlawing racial segregation in the nation’s public schools. After Gov. Orval Faubus sent National Guard troops to block Thomas and eight other students from entering Central High, President Eisenhower ordered in the Army’s 101st Airborne Division.

Soldiers stood in the school hallways and escorted each of the nine students as they went from classroom to classroom.

Each of the Little Rock Nine received Congressional Gold Medals shortly after the 40th anniversary of their enrollment. President Clinton presented the medals in 1999 to Thomas, LaNier, Melba Patillo Beals, Minnijean Trickey Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Gloria Ray Karlmark,



AP FILE PHOTO, NOV. 9, 1999

President Clinton sings with Jefferson Thomas, far left, and Ernest Green, center, at the conclusion of a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony in the White House, to honor them and the other members of The Little Rock Nine. Jefferson Thomas, 68, died Sunday in Columbus, said fellow Little Rock Nine member Minnijean Trickey Brown.

Terrence Roberts and Thelma Mothershed Wair.

In 2008, then President-elect Obama sent Thomas and other members of the Little Rock Nine special invitations to his inauguration as the nation’s first black president. During his campaign, he had said the Little Rock Nine’s courage in desegregating Central High helped make the opportunities in his life possible.

Thomas played a number of sports and was on the track team at Dunbar Junior High, but others had little to do with him once he entered Central, the state’s largest high school.

“I had played with some of the white kids from the neighborhood,” Thomas said. “I went up to Central High School after school, and we played basketball

and touch football together. I knew some of the kids.

“Eventually, I ran into them ... and they were not at all happy to see me,” Thomas added. “One of them said, ‘Well I don’t mind playing basketball or football with you or anything. You guys are good at sports. Everybody knows that, but you’re just not smart enough to sit next to me in the classroom.’”

Beals said Monday that Thomas was nicknamed “Roadrunner, because he was so fast. You could sometimes avoid danger by running fast.”

She said by phone from her home in California that Thomas always seemed to bring a light moment to the crisis.

“He was funny, he had a most extraordinary sense of

humor. He did sustain an enormous amount of damage and pain during the Little Rock crisis, but no matter what, he always had something refreshing and funny to say,” she said. “It could be the most horrible day and he would say ‘Yes, but how are you dressed and are you smiling?’”

Thomas also brought a bit of levity to the 2007 commemoration marking the 50th anniversary of the integration fight — letting the audience know how angry LaNier was with him when he stood up and cheered at a Central High Tigers pep rally.

Thomas thought the white students were carrying the school flag and yelling the school cheer. He said LaNier glared at him and later set him straight: It was the Confederate flag and the students were singing “Dixie.”

After graduation, Thomas served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam and later became an accounting clerk with the Department of Defense.

Following the 2008 election, Thomas said in an interview that he supported Hillary Rodham Clinton in the Ohio primary and he also liked former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, who made a bid for the Republican nomination.

“It would have been a hard decision for me to make if Huckabee was running against Obama,” Thomas added.