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175TH STORE

Boardman welcomes new retailer

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The Vindicator

TUESDAY
MAY 10, 2011
50¢

Oh Wow! children's center prepares for Thursday's opening

WORLD OF WONDER

By KRISTINE GILL
kgill@vindy.com

WINDOW WASHERS AND caution tape were outside the Oh Wow! building Monday, but inside, 100 first-graders were testing the new center's exhibits.

Oh Wow! The Roger & Gloria Jones Children's Center for Science & Technology officially opens Thursday, but 18 groups of students already have come through its doors in the last three weeks to try out the activities and make suggestions.

"We've had preschoolers through 12th grade," education manager Kelly Bucci said. "They've all had great experiences and found different ways to make things work."

The center targets children age 14 and under but can be tailored for all age groups, Bucci said. All exhibits have a STEM focus in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The two-floor facility at 11 W. Federal St. is owned by First National Bank of Pennsylvania, which has offices next door. Peter Asimakopoulos, executive vice president for small-business banking and the Youngstown market president, said the bank's investment in the center is really an investment in the city.

"The youth is such an important part of the community, and we just felt it was a worthwhile project in the central business district and for education," Asimakopoulos said. "It's for our future. The more we can get the students interested in learning, the better."

Asimakopoulos said First National offered "very favorable lease terms" for renting the former McCrory department store building, vacant for the last two decades. The

See OH WOW!, A4



ROBERT K. YOSAY | THE VINDICATOR
Cody Fritz, 7, plays with the stream table, where students can control water pressure to keep plastic balls afloat. Cody is a first-grader at United Local schools in Hanoverton and was visiting Oh Wow! in downtown Youngstown on Monday with his class.

IF YOU GO

Oh Wow! The Roger & Gloria Jones Children's Center for Science & Technology will open to the public Thursday at its 11 W. Federal St. location downtown.

HOURS & EVENTS

- Monday-Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Friday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.
- Admission is \$5 per person. Children 2 and under are free, and senior citizens and veterans are \$4 per person.
- For more information about booking field trips

or other groups, visit <http://valleykids.org>.

◆ Today, the board of trustees will host an open house for donors by invitation only from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

◆ On Wednesday, there will be a friends and family event by invitation only from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

◆ On Thursday, there will be an opening ceremony for the public at 10 a.m.



See OH WOW!, A4

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See OH WOW!, A4

City officials again seek proposals for V&M project

By DAVID SKOLNICK
skolnick@vindy.com

YOUNGSTOWN

City officials will try for the third time to find a qualified company to handle a major railroad construction and relocation project needed for V&M Star's \$650 million expansion.

The city began advertising today for the work with proposals to be opened at noon June 10. If all goes well, the work on the

project would start in mid- to late July, said Charles Shasho, the city's deputy director of public works.

"The third time's the charm, they say," Shasho quipped.

The project will take about 300 days to complete, and was originally planned to be done in time for the V&M expansion project, which will be finished in December.

But Shasho and V&M officials say the rail project no longer needs

to be finished that early.

"It won't impact their operations," Shasho said.

The city project consists of building and relocating railroad lines and installing storm-sewer lines with about \$14.4 million from the federal stimulus package.

"The scope of the project hasn't

changed," Shasho said. "It's pretty much stayed the same," except there are a few portions of the rail line that will be raised by about 5 feet.

The city rejected four proposals for this work in June 2010. The project's original estimate was \$13.56 million, but the proposals ranged from \$18.18 million to \$20.21 million.

After almost four months of

talks with V&M, the state rail com-

mission, the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, the city changed the project's scope and opened proposals Oct. 19.

The city reduced the base proposal to \$11.35 million and included about \$3 million in add-ons for the project. Four of the six proposals for the revised work were lower than the \$14.4 million project cost

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The Vindicator

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inside today

ANIMAL-CRUELTY CASE

Two people are facing charges in the case of a badly burned dog found wandering in Sharon, Pa.

LOCAL & STATE, A3

NEW BOARDMAN COACH

The Boardman school board unanimously approved the hiring of Mark D'Eramo as head football coach.

SPORTS, B1

'FOREVER' WORTH IT

Easy Street Productions' "Forever Plaid" is an adorable, enjoyable and impressive musical comedy, a Vindicator reviewer writes.

VALLEY LIFE, C1

Filing in Oakhill case accuses Gains of misconduct

By JOHN W. GOODWIN JR.

jgoodwin@vindy.com

YOUNGSTOWN

Defense attorneys for Anthony M. Cafaro Sr., his sister, and his business interests in the Oakhill Renaissance Place criminal conspiracy case are asking a judge to inspect a list of documents they say may be pertinent to the case's being dismissed.

Attorneys say reasons for a dismissal against their clients are largely based on prosecutorial misconduct and vindictiveness by Mahoning County Prosecu-

tor Paul Gains and his staff.

In the Oak-hill criminal case, Cafaro, former president of the Cafaro Co., the Cafaro Co. and two of its affiliates, and two current and two former county officials are charged with conspiring to impede the move of the county's Department of Job and Family Services from Cafaro Co.-owned rented quarters on Garland Avenue to the county-owned Oakhill building.

Oakhill is the former Forum Health Southside Medical Center, which the

county bought in 2006 and to which JFS moved the following year.

Visiting William H. Judge Wolff Jr. of Kettering is presiding over the criminal case, in which no trial date has been set.

The memorandum was filed by attorneys represent-

ing Cafaro, his sister, Flora Cafaro, who is charged with money laundering, and Cafaro businesses Ohio Valley Mall Co. and the Marion Plaza Inc. in preparation for a July 11 hearing on defense motions.

"I am looking forward to the truth coming out. I have no other comment," Gains said Monday.

The memorandum says the documents are needed to establish that Gain's office abused the grand-jury investigation in the

See OAKHILL, A4

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OH WOW!

Continued from A1

bank bought the building in the late 1990s but hadn't found a proper tenant until someone suggested what was then the Children's Museum of The Valley.

The biggest donations have come from Roger and Gloria Jones of Youngstown, who founded Fireline Inc., which makes refractory pieces used to melt metals and cast turbine blades in airplanes. The couple has donated more than \$250,000 to the center so far.

"We truly feel it's something valid," said Roger, 83, chairman of the board at Fireline. "It's for the city, it will help downtown, but the key part is having a place where children can feel excited about science and technology."

Gloria, 77, said their involvement was twofold.

Barbati "It touches two things in our hearts — the children in the city schools, and we certainly hope they can improve their computer skills, science and math scores because we think that's the future of Youngstown ... and also we have a great interest in urban renewal!"

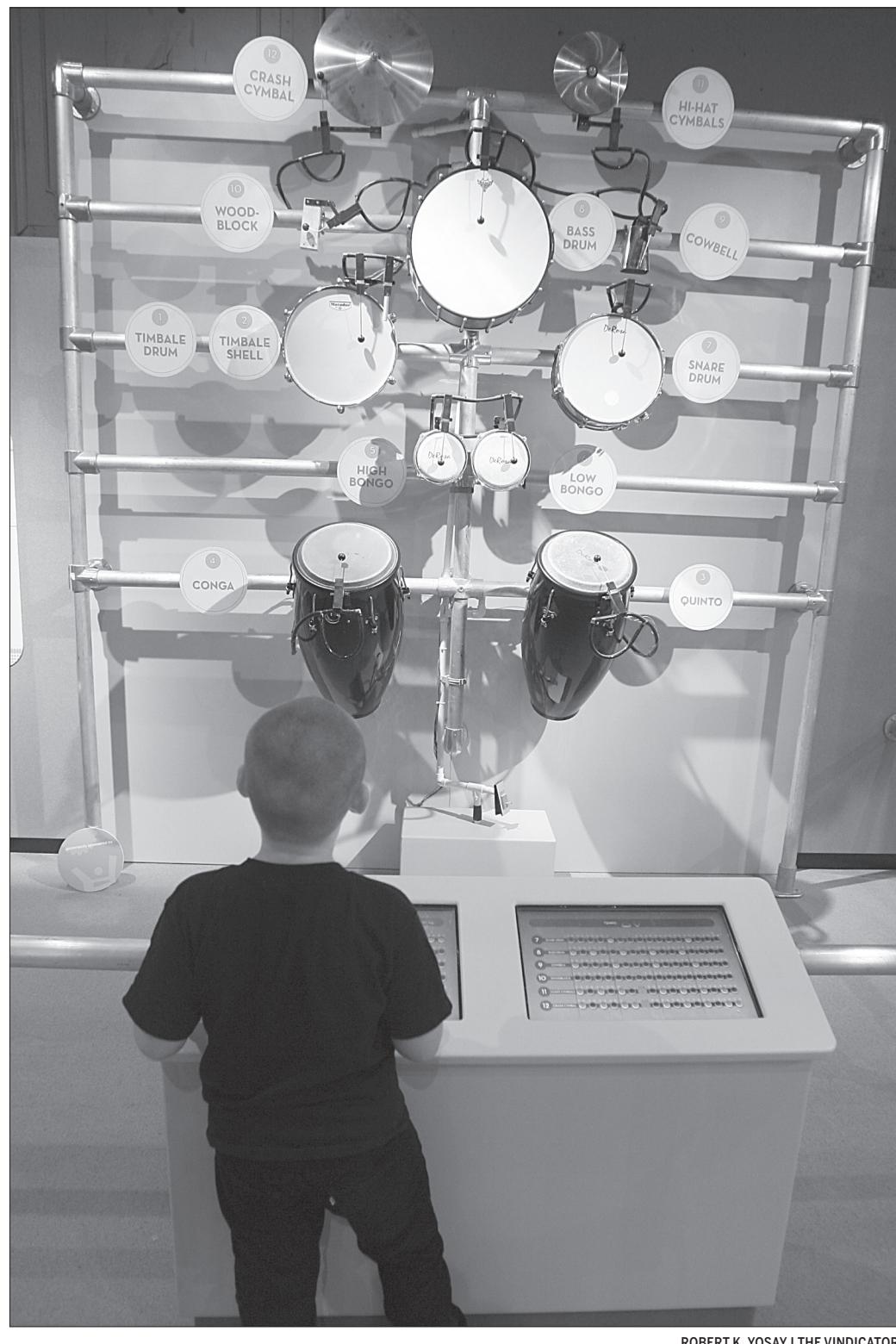
The center's executive director, Suzanne Barbati, said construction costs inside the building were close to \$1 million. The exhibits themselves cost an additional \$500,000.

The center's opening marks more than a year of work to retool the museum. The Children's Museum of The Valley on East Boardman Street closed in December 2009. Barbati said the museum, which focused on early-childhood education, couldn't sustain itself with such a narrow audience.

"We said if we're going to stay here, we need to make this more of a STEM focus," she said.

Barbati came on board in March 2009 and helped raise money from private donors through 2010.

The center will target the five-county area of Trumbull, Mahoning, Columbiana, Mercer and Lawrence counties. The old museum had 11,000 square feet of space compared to the 16,000 available at the McCrory building. Barbati



ROBERT K. YOSAY | THE VINDICATOR

A student from United Local schools plays the rhythm machine, pushing different screens to play music. He was one of 100 kids who visited Oh Wow! on Monday, just days before its grand opening.

said a universal design approach, including wheelchair access and features for people of all abilities, makes the facility eligible and competitive for state grants.

Barbati expects about 30,000 visitors each year but said that's a modest estimate. She has been working with the city to improve marked parking, lighting and snow removal in the vicinity.

"I think this is nostalgic or reminiscent of those days when the city was a destination, and we want to help it become that again," she said.

Mayor Jay Williams thinks the opening will offer a chance for Youngstown families to spend time to-

gether and for kids to explore their natural curiosity for all things science.

He said he's excited to visit with his wife and their 9-month-old son Ethan.

"I'm eager to take my son there, even though he's a bit young. It will also give me cover for acting like a kid myself once I get in there," he said.

Amanda Wood, a first-grade teacher from United Local schools in Hanoverton, said the space made it easy to keep track of students during their visit, and the facility was close enough for a day trip.

"Even the setup is nice because they're so contained. Some places have so many floors," she said. "It's an hour drive from Hanover-

ton, but it's still closer than Cleveland or Pittsburgh."

The ground-level floor of the center holds the permanent displays geared toward state content standards for each grade level. Brightly colored walls enclose exhibits including a stream table, a green screen to simulate a weather anchor's job, a hurricane chamber and a musical organ made of PVC pipe.

"We have been playing with a lot of water," said first-grader Julianna Logan, 7. "My favorite was the tornado. You step in and push all the buttons and it feels like a tornado."

"Like a hurricane," said first-grader Alexis Gibus, 8. "Yeah, one of those," Julianna said.

Despite the setbacks, Shasho said Monday: "I'm confident we'll get some good proposals."

With all of the contractors at the V&M expansion site, the delays turned out

to be beneficial, he said.

"There would have been some construction coordination issues because of the sheer number of construction companies on-site," Shasho said.

V&M

Continued from A1

estimate.

But the city rejected all six Nov. 10 because the apparent low proposal of

\$14,339,389.10 failed to include a cost for two gate-crossing signals, and two contractors threatened to file lawsuits against the city over the bidding process.

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OAKHILL

Continued from A1

matter and grand-jury secrecy.

The Cafaro lawyers also contend there was continued direct involvement of Gains in the investigation and prosecution of the defendants after the appointment of special prosecutors.

The memorandum says Gains and special prosecu-

tors in the Oakhill case as well as others "routinely used personal email accounts to conduct official business." Personal cellphones also were used to conduct official business, the memorandum said. Those communications, it said, cannot be excluded from the public record.

The memorandum says defendants' efforts to secure documents through the Public Records Act have been met with "false decla-

rations and concealment."

The memorandum does go on to accuse Gains of breaching a settlement agreement related to two lawsuits filed by the Ohio Valley Mall Co. in 2006. It says Gains secretly contacted the Ohio Ethics Commission recommending an OEC investigation into the Oakhill and Garland properties after signing an agreement that no further action would be taken against the company.

The memorandum also says Gains and his staff funneled grand-jury information to the OEC, which in turn used that information in its investigations. It says Gains' abuse of grand-jury secrecy tainted the OEC investigation and subsequent appointment of OEC attorneys as special prosecutors.

The memorandum says Gains and his staff also abused their power by hindering the impartial functioning of the grand jury.

McDonald schools treasurer says revenues are up

By MARY R. SMITH
news@vindy.com

MCDONALD

The McDonald school district's projected year-end balance in 2015 has gone up about \$45,000 based on new projections since October.

In a five-year forecast presented to the board Monday, Treasurer Brian Stidham said that revenues have gone up a little more than expected and expenditures have decreased since a five-year forecast was presented in October 2010.

So a projected \$47,711 carryover balance for 2015 has gone up to \$93,371.

Stidham, however, said the forecast can change again.

Also in play is what Gov. John Kasich's budget winds up being. The budget has passed the Ohio House by

a narrow margin but must now go through the Ohio Senate.

"It can all change by 2015 by a long shot," Stidham said.

Current projections are for a \$6,246 million in expenditures in 2015, and two levies are up for renewal in 2014 and 2015. The first is a 3.9-mill emergency levy in 2014 for five years to generate \$205,000 annually and a 4.9-mill, five-year emergency levy in 2015 to generate \$260,000 annually.

Voters approved a 10.75-mill, five-year levy May 3 to generate \$580,000 annually.

The board Monday passed a special resolution thanking the voters: "The residents of the McDonald Local Schools generously sacrificed by approving the emergency levy in the most

difficult and challenging economic times."

The board also honored several employees and residents who were on the school levy committee for their efforts to help get the levy pass. They included residents Jerry Andrews, Patrick McCarthy, Nat Gallo, Sean Murphy, Lori Chepke, Tammy Camuso, John Saganich of the levy committee, and employees Carol Augustine, Gary Carkido, Lou Dimitrovich, Diane Fossacecca, Chris Rupe, Pam Streb and Dan Williams.

The cost of school lunches for the 2011-12 school year will be the same at \$2.50, but milk will go up from 35 cents to 50 cents for Roosevelt Elementary School.

A one-year contract for natural gas for the district

was approved for \$5.75 per cubic foot with Gas Search. That's a reduction from the \$6.74 the district had been paying. An electricity contract was approved through May 2014 with First Energy Power for Schools, a conglomerate of state school-related groups, at 5.28 cents per kilowatt hour. The rate had been 5 cents per kilowatt hour.

The board also accepted donations from the following: \$5,000 from Tim Cherotti of Horizon Management Services Co. of Cleveland to the football program. He is a graduate of McDonald high school; \$50 anonymous donation for the football program in the name of Jenny Shimko; and \$150 donation from Mickey Meser to be deposited into the high school principal's fund.

Kucinich to run in another state?

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Democratic Rep. Dennis Kucinich said Monday he may run for a House seat in another state if he loses his Ohio seat to redistricting next year.

The well-known liberal who has run for president twice said people across the country have been asking him to run in their states. He said he's nowhere near making a decision.

"If I am forced to move, then I certainly am going to consider moving," the eight-term congressman said in a telephone interview. "Obviously, I am only going to go where I am wanted."

He traveled recently to Washington state, which will add a new congressional seat, and plans another trip there later this month. Those stops have helped to fan speculation about a possible move.

"I have a full travel schedule and I'm certainly grateful for the support I have in other areas of the country, but I am

not ready to say that I am moving anywhere," he said.

Kucinich said he expects that Republicans in control of redistricting in Ohio will target his district. The state stands to lose two House seats because of population shifts.

"This isn't my choice, though," he said. "It is being forced upon me. What I am not going to do is simply play the role of a victim to redistricting, because I don't look at life that way."

Kucinich, 64, has deep roots in his hometown of Cleveland, where he was mayor. He first ran for city council there at age 21.

"I don't have any illusions about the fact that it's difficult to move," he said. "It's difficult to start in another place. The good news is that during two presidential campaigns I got a chance to know the country," he said.

Kucinich sought the Democratic nomination for president in 2004 and 2008.

CHAMBER

Continued from A1

to gain to look back and reconsider discussions about its political stance.

"Where would you rather spend the time?" he said. "I'd rather spend it on trying to make sure there's a job for that kid that graduates high school or finishes college."

The second-guessing, however, doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon.

Aside from those businesses leaving the chamber, there's also an anti-chamber movement sparked by the Ohio State Penitentiary, Chapter 5041. In April, it sent 250 letters to chamber members informing them that members of Chapter 5041 would no longer conduct business at their establishments.

Penitentiary President Doug Sollitto said he received an overwhelmingly positive response from up to 30 businesses that sent return letters.

Sollitto, along with the Trumbull County Correctional Institute, will mail today an additional 250 letters to chamber mem-

bers, this time informing them of potential protests and also asking for Humphries' resignation.

Humphries said he has no plans to resign and that he's "not going anywhere."

The anti-chamber letters also have put strains on some businesses that become chamber members for perks such as health insurance. Some businesses, such as Credit Union One, which quit last month, said one factor it needed to consider before leaving the chamber was the loss of those perks.

And now, some have to deal with a boycott from nonmembers of former members.

Humphries said the chamber decided to remove its membership list from its website to protect members from what he termed "misuse" by people such as Sollitto.

"When you come out and make opinions, trying to do what you think is right, you're going to create a difference of opinion," he said. "It's not intended to hurt anybody. It's not intended for someone to take it [personally]."



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