**THE CHASE:** Five cows remained on the lam near Grand Rapids on Thursday, a day after the cattle hauler that was delivering them to a Wisconsin slaughterhouse overturned on U.S.-131. Police said the cows hoofed it over highway guardrails, forced traffic detours and caused at least one accident. Michigan State Police Trooper Joe Young said the cows will be euthanized.

#### Region

#### **Rain forecast** spurs flash flood watch

A tornado watch for Wayne and Monroe counties was canceled Thursday evening, but a flash flood watch remained in effect through southeast Michigan until 8 a.m.

The National Weather Service said up to 2 inches of rain could hit some areas, causing flooding along streams and rivers and in low lying areas.

There were reports of a brief tornado touchdown in the Battle Creek area and the roof being ripped off a home in Allegan County. No injuries were reported.

Consumers Energy said about 8,000 customers were without power Thursday evening.

#### **Oakland**

PONTIAC

#### Suspect in deadly crash to be arraigned

A woman was charged Thursday with seconddegree murder, assault and child abuse after a car chase Wednesday that left a 21-year-old woman dead and another critically injured. Police did not release the name of the suspect, who reportedly was angry over a Facebook argument.

Police said the woman who chased Alesha Abernathy and her passenger, Danielle Booth — and rammed their car — had her 3-year-old daughter in the backseat. Abernathy died.

Police said Booth had filed a police report Tuesday claiming the suspect was harassing and threatening her. The woman is expected to be arraigned today in 50th District Court in Pontiac.

#### Michigan

#### State activists to protest Tea Party petitions

Leaders of the state tea party movement are calling on activists to come to the state Capitol today to protest against the formation of what they believe is a phony political party.

State elections officials are scheduled to begin review at 10 a.m. of 60,000 Tea Party petition signatures turned in by a group headed by a former UAW worker. The petitions are aimed at qualifying the party to run candidates for office in the November election.

**Quick hit** 

**■ MYSTERY SOLVED:** A man who told officers Monday that he lost his memory was picked up Thursday by his brother, who saw the man's photo in a news report. He placed his sibling in the care of mental health professionals, the Macomb County Sheriff's Office said.

COMPILED FROM REPORTS BY CECIL ANGEL, TAMMY STABLES DAWSON BELL AND STEVE NEAVLING

# Taxpayers stuck with DPS bill

#### New levy a result of 7 lawsuits

By CHASTITY PRATT DAWSEY FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER

Detroit property owners found a new markup on their summer tax bills — a levy to pay off lawsuits against the Detroit Public Schools.

Taxpayers will have to pay off \$1.01 million from seven lawsuits at a rate of about 0.1 mills, or \$1 per \$10,000 of assessed property value, according to the city assessor's office.

The lawsuits include the \$300,000 judgment rendered last July for activist DPS teachers Steve Conn and Heather Miller, who were fired and subsequently rehired.

A judgment tax levy does not require voter approval.

The school district faces an estimated \$363-million deficit and cannot afford to take on the costs, school officials said.

In May, the district notified

Linda Bade, the city's chief assessor, of the judgments that date from July 2009 through May 2010, said Steve Wasko, spokesman for DPS.

"With the financial emergency we face and the need to utilize every single opportunity to reduce expenses and ultimately, in compliance with what state law requires, we've advised the city assessor to make this levy at this time," he said.

"We took this action as soon as we knew it was available to us. I can't explain why past leadership did not do this," he

Rose Bogaert, chair of the Wayne County Taxpayers Association, said residents already are overburdened because of local government waste and nonsense. "Every level of government

seems to be doing what it can to get money out of people any way they can without having to ask them for an increase. But the same people are paying all the bills and it's getting

to be such a problem somebody needs to look into this and find a different solution," she said.

"People are being nickeled and dimed to death and the people can't afford it anymore.'

The last time city property owners paid a judgment levy for DPS was 2003-04, for \$5.220,270, according to the assessor's office.

CONTACT CHASTITY PRATT DAWSEY: 313-223-4537 OR CPRATT@FREEPRESS



Darius Guyton, 28, left, Rafel Moore, 26, and David Zanders, 26, live at the Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park, The center is one of a few nationwide dedicated to providing housing and other services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teens and young adults.

# BLACK, GAY, PRO

### Detroit festival celebrates its 15th anniversary

By NAOMI R. PATTON FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

This weekend, Detroit will play host to one of the gay community's largest Black Pride events in the country.

Hotter Than July organizers are celebrating the event's 15th anniversary, which in past years has grown to about 20,000 people flocking to Palmer Park.

The event is a celebration within the gay community, organizers and activists say, of the positive impact lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have had on Detroit and the nation.

"Detroit really is one of the jewels in the crown" of Black Pride events, said Earl Fowlkes, president of the Washington, D.C.-based International Federation of Black Prides.

"There are some really affirming things happening in Detroit that are very unique," Fowlkes added, and he was



Guyton practices a dance move on the dance floor at the Ellis Center on July 14.

effusive about the 2009 election of the city's first openly gay elected official, Charles Pugh, to City Council and what that may signal to the African-American LGBT community.

Organizers and others active in the

#### "DETROIT REALLY IS ONE OF THE JEWELS IN THE **CROWN.**"

**EARL FOWLKES,** president of the International Federation of Black Prides

gay community say Detroit's status within the national LGBT community often goes overlooked in the city, but is ac-

knowledged nationally. Johnny Jenkins helped co-found Hotter Than July and now works as a program officer for the Arcus Foundation's

Michigan LGBT Rights Program. "We get more credit outside of Detroit than we do within its boundaries," he said.

■ CITY IN FOREFRONT OF ADVOCACY, SERVICES FOR GAY COMMUNITY. 10A

## Michigan Merit Exam scores at highest ever

State officials credit tougher curriculum

**Bv PEGGY WALSH-SARNECKI, KRISTI TANNER-WHITE** and CHASTITY PRATT DAWSEY

State high school test scores are up — at their highest levels since the Michigan Merit Exam was introduced four years ago for high school juniors.

The test includes the ACT college entrance test.

Math and writing scores have been steadily improving over the last four years. In writing, 44% of students scored proficient or higher in 2010, compared with 43% in 2009; 50% were proficient or higher in math, up from 49%

Reading and science scores also are up, although they have been erratic, up one year and down the next over the last four years. In reading, 65% of students were proficient, up from 60%, and 58% were proficient in science, up from 56%.

The state Department of Education credits the more difficult high school curriculum, including requiring algebra for ninth-graders, for the improvements.

The highest scores in the state were at Bloomfield Hills Schools' International Academy, where 100% of the students were proficient in reading, math and social studies. They also had the highest average ACT scores in the state, at

#### Treep.com See test results for schools statewide

Detroit Public Schools' Renaissance High School had the second-highest reading scores in the tri-county area, with 89.6% of students proficient. The average ACT score was

Rochester Adams High School had the next highest math scores in the state, with 86.8% proficient. The average ACT score was 23.8.

"We're certainly excited about the performance of our students on the state assessment," said Alesia Flye, Rochester Community Schools' director of curriculum. "We think it's just a reflection of the instruction the students are receiving throughout the district.... This kind of information on the state assessment helps us on our work to target instruction for all of our students as we work towards our goal of 100% proficiency for all of our students.

Statewide, students scored poorer in social studies, with 79% proficient in 2010, compared with 81% in 2009 and down 4 percentage points since 2007.

Michigan juniors in public schools scored an ACT average of 19.3. The national average is 21.1, out of a possible 36.

■ CONTACT PEGGY WALSH-SARNECKI:



# work

Lanes are to close between I-75, I-96

By MATT HELMS

The state is about to drop a small but painful dose of orange barrels on I-94 in Detroit.

The Michigan Department of Transportation said Thursday that crews will kick off the \$1.8 million, 10-week project Aug. 2. It will upgrade lighting on the freeway between I-96 and I-75. The project is likely to lead to lengthy delays as the freeway loses its left lanes each way for weeks at a time.

That's a prime traffic area along I-94, and it has regular backups as the freeway intersects with I-75, the Lodge and I-96 between Wayne State University and the New Center area. I-94 carries an average of more than 146,000 vehicles a day on that stretch, according to state traffic counts.

Backups on I-94 could spill onto other freeways, especially during the first week of the project as motorists adjust, MDOT spokesman Rob Morosi said. The project will replace more than a dozen light poles, foundation, a median barrier wall and nine light towers. The work will be done in two phases, first between I-75 and the Lodge, and then between the Lodge and

The latest construction adds to a heavy load on I-94 this year, including the ongoing overhaul of the expressway's interchange at I-696 in Macomb County.

"It's a very old freeway," Morosi said.



#### METRO < AROUND THE REGION

#### **Oakland**

FERNDALE

#### Noise ordinance talk worries some

Residents in Ferndale trying to tighten the city's noise ordinance have downtown merchants worried.

The proposed ordinance requested in a petition "would basically put some of our people out of business" or threaten their livelihoods by curtailing music at restaurants, Downtown Development Authority spokeswoman Chris Hughes said. The proposal would ban amplified sound outdoors and require lower decibel levels citywide, Hughes said.

Sherry Wells, 63, who lives with her daughter Amanda Diehl, 19, near the downtown, said they often lose sleep because of music from Rosie O'Grady's and other restaurants. Wells said she had 166 signatures and needs a total of 266 to have the petition come before the City Council.

The proposal will be on the agenda of the council meeting at 7:30 p.m. Monday at City Hall, 300 E. Nine Mile, if Wells turns in enough petitions Monday, City Clerk Cherilynn Tallman said. If council members vote down the proposal, it would appear on the Nov. 3 ballot for residents to decide, Tallman said.

SOUTH LYON

#### Mom accused of killing daughter dies

A South Lyon woman, who police say they believe killed her disabled, 13-year-old adopted daughter with prescription pills, died Wednesday, police said Thursday.

Chief Lloyd Collins said Donna Carlson, 52, died after being unconscious and on a ventilator since she was found with her daughter, Grace, at their home Saturday. Carlson also had taken pills. Collins said police are "about to close out our investigation" and that there's no indication anyone else was involved in the murder-suicide.

Police have said Grace was mentally and physically handicapped. Police said the daughter had assaulted Carlson twice in recent months, breaking her mother's nose at least once.

Grace died after being administered prescription drugs, police said. South Lyon Lt. Steve Sharpe said this week that some of the drugs found at the house were of the types used to treat depression and panic attacks, but it was unclear what drugs were used for the overdose.

#### Wayne

#### Bricks from schools to be sold

Bricks from the old Cass Tech, Finney, Mackenzie, Mumford and Chadsey high schools — all slated for demolition — will be preserved and restored for sale to the public to raise money for the Public Schools Foundation, Detroit Public Schools officials said Thursday.

"We think this is an important program to honor the legacy and history of these schools, while also acknowledging that students deserve facilities that support 21st-Century learning," said Chacona Johnson, foundation president and CEO.

Two entry arches and other items from Cass Tech also will be preserved, officials said.

#### **Macomb**

#### Worker finds marijuana in box

A worker at Mopar Parts Distribution Center found two 10-pound packages of marijuana Thursday in a box from an auto parts manufacturer in the southwestern U.S., Public Safety Director John Riley said.

Investigators checked other boxes shipped from the same distributor but didn't find any more marijuana.

#### Man charged in attempted carjacking

A man who police say tried to carjack a woman Wednesday was charged with six felonies that could put him behind bars for life. Vincenzo Perry is being held in the Macomb County Jail on \$1-million bond after his arraignment Thursday in 39th District Court in Roseville.

Perry, 31, was arrested Wednesday leaving the apartment complex near 11 Mile and Wentworth where he was hiding, Deputy Chief James Berlin said. Earlier, he tried to carjack a 52-year-old Eastpointe woman near Mesle and Gratiot but stole a furniture delivery truck instead,

His preliminary examination is scheduled for Aug. 4.

- COMPILED FROM REPORTS BY BILL LAITNER, GINA DAMRON, TAMMY STABLES BATTAGLIA, ZLATI MEYER AND CECIL ANGEL

## Detroit sets a good example

Black LGBT activism. services are famed

By NAOMI R. PATTON

It was a warm Friday night in April when nearly 200 people turned out at Cobo Center for an NAACP Detroit Chapter Freedom Weekend panel discussion. The topic: "Îs Gay the New Black?'

Emotions occasionally ran high as the question was raised: Can the fight for equal rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and, specifically, the African-American LGBT community, be equated with the seminal civil rights movement?

No conclusion was reached. But events and discussions like that energize the local black gay community, which provides activism, advocacy, education and support services and health care resources to LGBT Detroiters.

This weekend's Hotter Than July festival is a celebration of those efforts.

Sharon Lettman, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based National Black Justice Coalition, who was on the NAACP panel, pays tribute to the city's African-American LGBT leaders.

"They're unified.... They understand the local politics, social services, they understand social justice," Lettman said. "I fell in love with the city of Detroit because of their leadership."

"I grew up in black gay Detroit. That's where I learned my activism," said Alicia Skillman, executive director of Equality Michigan, the largest LGBT advocacy organization in the state. "I became active just watching other people.... It really gave me a sense of pride."

Skillman, the first African American to head Equality Michigan, was part of the creation 10 years ago of S.P.I.C.E. (Sistahs Providing Intelligence Creativity and Empowerment), the city's only support and service group for African-American lesbians. It rivals the country's largest African-American group in Los Angeles.

"When people realize what we provide and what we do, they're impressed," said Andrea Wilson, chair of the S.P.I.C.E. board. "We have worked so hard to get to where we're a recognizable force."

One of the jewels that many activists point to is the Ruth Ellis Center, the only facility in

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Photos by WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

Lewis Smith, 41, left, and Robert Clark, 29, talk over plans for the Hotter Than July black gay pride festival.

LGBT community numbers

about 80,000-90,000 men and

tive director of Kick - The

Agency for LGBT African

Americans and development

director for AIDS Partnership

Michigan, remembers when

Hotter Than July started in

1995. It was barely two dozen

people tucked away in one of

attend the event annually.

Mayor Dave Bing campaigned

Today an estimated 20,000

the metro area's parks.

Curtis Lipscombe, execu-



Rafel Moore, 26, among the young LGBT adults helped at Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park, talks with its executive director, Laura Hughes.

women.

the Midwest dedicated to providing housing and support groups for LGBT teens and young adults.

"There's a dedication in this community to take care of young folks," said Laura Hughes, the center's executive director. The teens, 70% male and 30% female, come to Ruth Ellis, Hughes said, "to be whoever they are."

Detroit City Council President Charles Pugh, who is openly gay, says he wouldn't consider himself an activist, but he understands how his election reflects on the city and its African-American gay community.

"There are still people who call me (names)," he said. He said, however, his election reflects a welcoming Detroit, which "is good for our image around the country."

"I'm proud of Detroit for accepting me as I am and electing me and allowing me to be integral to this community," Pugh said.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not track the population by sexual orientation, but using the common estimate that 10% of the population is gay or lesbian, local advocates say Detroit's African-American

#### **Hotter Than July**

#### **15TH PALMER PARK FESTIVAL**

When: Noon-8 p.m. Saturday Where: Palmer Park, at McNichols and Pontchartrain Cost: Free

#### AIDS PARTNERSHIP **MICHIGAN 3RD ANNUAL BALL**

When: 5-8 p.m. Saturday Where: Palmer Park Cost: Free

#### **JAZZ BRUNCH**

When: Noon-3 p.m. Sunday Where: They Say, 267 Jos. Campau, Detroit **Cost:** \$35

there last year, as did Pugh. Both are expected to attend this year.

Skillman agrees with Lettman that Detroit's community is unique, "because we're more organized ... with the passion of local folks wanting to be involved, create organization with a solid infrastructure."

"I think we're just really committed to Detroit's residents," said Lipscombe, who says people "are floored by the progress in Detroit."

■ CONTACT NAOMI R. PATTON: 313-223-3327







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