



Charter Township of Van Buren

Lake Ledger

W i n t e r 2 0 0 3

*September Days
Programs and Services for
"Seasoned Adults"*



John and Ruth Blevins on their way in to the Christmas Party



Glenda Wright and Santa

SEPTEMBER DAYS SENIOR CENTER ANNUAL HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

The chilly winter wind could not quench the warmth of the holiday spirit, as the Senior Center welcomed in a record-breaking crowd for the annual Christmas Party. Almost 400 of our senior center members enjoyed food, fun, dancing and friends in a very merry atmosphere. This party set the mood for the holiday season, with help from many volunteers, the *Boots in Motion* dance group, Senior and Recreation staff, the Township Board, the *Varitones*, and Deb's Catering. Happy Holidays!

Erin Alston, BSW
Senior Coordinator

Inside Info:

- Museum Information Pg. 6
- Recreation Program Pg. 12-17
- Environmental Pg. 18-19
- Library Information Pg. 21
- Trash Guidelines Pg. 22-23

SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

By: Cindy C. King, Supervisor

Once again, it's that time when we look back and reflect on the events of the past year. It is a time to be thankful and a time to make commitments for the year ahead. The year 2002 has been another whirlwind year for Van Buren Charter Township and you have been a part of that frenzy.

As I have said for the past two years, growth continues to be the number one priority facing the Township Board, staff and the public. The term "growth" may mean many things to many people, however, I would venture for all of us growth means new development, busy roads, and change. You may be part of that "growth" and are a new resident to Van Buren. If so, we welcome you and hope you will become part of the quickly vanishing small-town community of which long-term Van Buren residents pride themselves. Indeed, many of you may not even know that it is Van Buren Charter Township you call home instead of the "Belleville, MI 48111" mail designation that is on just about every piece of mail you receive. Almost in the middle of a square that makes up the nearly 36 square miles that comprise the township is a "Y" shaped configuration; this is the City of Belleville located at the heart of the township.

The City of Belleville and Van Buren Charter Township are two separate and distinct political boundaries. Along with Sumpter Township, the three communities share a community post office and the 48111 zip code. Other shared resources include Van Buren Public Schools (which also includes Canton and Ypsilanti Townships), the Fred C. Fischer Library and for Belleville and Van Buren, the Belleville Area Museum. For all other purposes, the communities are separate and while you may list your return address as "Belleville," you may in fact be a Van Buren resident.

If you are a long-time resident of Van Buren - I've lived here about 37 years, having attended and graduated from Van Buren Public Schools - you have likely found the growth occurring in our community to be a challenge. To be sure, you remember Van Buren when it was truly "country." Streetlights were virtually nonexistent, dirt roads the norm, and one could travel Belleville Road and perhaps pass only one or two cars. Do you remember the brick ranch house that stood where the Belleville Road Wendy's stands? What about Cloverdale's, Box's Jewelers and the time when we had no McDonald's or Burger King? As I look to the year 2003, I commit to you that the Township Board and staff remain dedicated to managing the growth that continues to occur. We can't "just say no," as all property owners have legal rights, but we can do our best to ensure the development of the township is that which will stand the test of time, that which will be of value for many years to come.

As you know, our attempt to seek additional millage to fund public safety facilities was not successful. The proposed increase in operating millage from the current 3.0 mills to 3.4 mills was defeated as was a new millage proposal of .6 mill for capital improvements. What this means is that the 2002 winter tax bill you should have received by now could be the last tax bill that will reflect the 3.0 mills levied for public safety operating; a millage that funds about 54% of the operations of the Public Safety Department. What does this mean? The Board, in conjunction with the Public Safety Committee, will soon need to make a decision about whether or not to come to you again for support for operating millage; a millage which could be the same 3.0 mills you have paid for over ten years to fund public safety services or some other amount. As this topic receives further attention, every attempt will be made to keep you, the taxpayer, informed.

SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

Continued on Page Six

COMCAST CABLE FRANCHISE RENEWED

The Board, at our October 15, 2002 meeting, approved a renewal of the cable franchise agreement with Comcast Corporation. The initial 10-year agreement (the franchise provides for a five year extension upon Comcast's substantial compliance with certain terms), sets forth numerous provisions including those that address customer service, construction standards and franchise fees. Residents should understand the franchise agreement addresses those items we are able to negotiate as provided by federal law. For instance, the township does not have the authority to regulate the rates consumers pay for receiving premium channels such as HBO, Starz or Showtime. Following is a list of key items agreed upon by Comcast and Van Buren:

- Agreement is non-exclusive; township may approach other competitive cable providers.
- Comcast must provide new facilities and equipment, expand channel capacity and upgrade its system throughout the term of the Agreement to reasonably meet the needs and interests of the township.
- One additional PEG (public, educational, governmental) channel will be provided to the township upon reaching capacity of existing PEG channels.

Treasurer's Office

By: Sharry A. Budd, Treasurer

- Township is to receive free installation, maintenance and basic service to all current and future township facilities, libraries and educational institutions.
- Enhanced construction underground and restoration standards.
- Enhanced customer service requirements including repairs, scheduling, customer-advocate availability, complaint procedures, and assistance for mobility-limited customers.
- Senior citizen discount in which Comcast will deduct 10% of the price of their Basic-1 Tier service for seniors ages 65 and older. This discount is for those seniors who receive Basic-1 Tier service only and for those who request said discount.
- Franchise fee reporting and audit rights.
- Township to continue to receive 5% franchise fee for term of Agreement.
- Indemnification and insurance provided to township. Free internet access and cable modem service to each current and future public school and library.
- Comcast's commitment to use "best practices" available in any of its Michigan franchises in the township.
- PEG capital facilities grant paid by Comcast to the township of \$155,000 for the first 10 years of Agreement, and \$45,000 for balance of five-year extension (total of \$200,000).
- Continued "best efforts" provision of advertising space to promote township public service announcements and local events in the community.

This Agreement is the culmination of many months of work on the part of Comcast, the Cable Commission and the negotiating teams for the cable provider and the township. The Agreement reflects, for those areas that the township can influence, our desire for quality customer service. If you are interested, or have a concern regarding cable service, the Cable Commission is comprised of township residents who meet on a bi-monthly basis to address cable service in Van Buren. The Commission meets on the second Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November.



New Deputy Treasurer, Sean Bellingham

The Winter Tax bills are out and the township has extended collection until February 28, 2003 without penalty.

Just another reminder that if you have re-mortgaged or purchased a home you need to notify my office so our records reflect the proper data. We need you to keep us updated on what mortgage company the bills get sent to and if any change has occurred as to where you want the tax bill sent. We want you to help us keep your tax records correct.

The last couple of newsletters have seen changes in office staff. The first being the retirement of Barb Kauppila and the hiring of Donna Hunter. Donna has been a nice addition to the office.

The latest change was when my deputy, Bruce Malinczak left to accept a job offer from Canton Township. I certainly wish him the very best.

Fortunately for Van Buren, I was able to offer a position to Sean Bellingham who is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University with a degree in accounting and comes to us with five years experience as Treasurer in the City of Belleville.

Sean and his wife Michelle have two children, a four year-old son, Jared, and daughter, Haley, born November 5th.

Be sure to welcome him to Van Buren Township.

Winter has arrived and we've all gotten busy with the holidays. I wish you all a good new year and hope your holidays with family and friends were all you wanted it to be.

Remember my staff and I are always here to assist.

2002 HOLIDAY ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW



Crafters Bonnie Morris, Joan Everard and Charles Everard at the 2002 Holiday Arts and Crafts Show.

This year the Van Buren Township 19th Annual Holiday Arts and Crafts Show was filled with more unique items than ever before. As you entered in to each room you could see numerous hand-made crafts overflowing the area. Everyone seemed like kids walking through a Candy Land. You could find items such as hand-made baskets, snowmen painted on cedar shake shingles (say that three times fast); to an assortment of shiny garden accessories, yummy homemade chocolate candies and dazzling jewelry that looked simply amazing; just to name a few.

If buying something wasn't your intent for visiting the show than perhaps it was the socialization. This craft show sure does bring out the community, and when the community gathers together for a good-feeling occasion, the atmosphere is warm and uplifting. A majority of the crafters were from the community so visitors were able to mingle with crafters they knew. Even the crafters that weren't from the area were extremely pleasant and the visitors enjoyed their crafts.

On a side note, I love this craft show and hope the show continues on for many years to come. It is hard work to put this craft show together successfully; thank goodness I have such great help from the Recreation, and Building and Grounds Departments as well as the crafters themselves who help make things easier. They are always giving their advice and their past experiences at other craft shows. I find their advice to be helpful and useful.

I was very pleased with the craft show as well as our other various holiday festivities. For the first time this year Van Buren Township offered the community the opportunity to come out for Breakfast with Santa. Children of all ages came out to sit on Santa's knee and tell them what they were thankful for as well as what they would love to have for Christmas morning. The local King Brothers prepared pancakes for

those that came to see Santa. It was very exciting to see the children's faces as they first walked in the room to see Santa. That had to be one of the best feelings. In addition to Santa, we asked for donations for the Van Buren Animal Shelter. Those little critters need as much help as possible, especially during the cold winter months. The whole morning was filled with love and generosity. Christmas definitely keeps our department busy but the rewards are endless.

Now we move on to our winter activities, and I hope to see everyone on one of our winter outings or at our special events we will soon be offering. Also don't forget about thumbing through our program book to see what class you would like to join. We help in all sorts of ways for getting rid of that "cabin fever" you may suffer from the Michigan winter. So stay warm this winter because before you know it, spring will be in the air.

Jennifer Morris
Recreation Manager

NEW SOFTWARE DESIGNED TO AID IN TRACKING AND UPDATING DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT RECORDS



Developmental Services staff demonstrating new software

One of the never ending tasks of all governmental departments and their staff is the continued updating of the files, their storage, and ability to retrieve documents. The increase in development activity in the Township compounds the magnitude of that responsibility.

In June of this year the Department of Development began a process with all staff members to design, test, and incorporate a new component to our information management system. It was agreed that the system needed to provide for

accurate and efficient data organization and retrieval. A big part of the ultimate success of the project was the guidance and input of the Township's information systems administrator, JEF, Inc. The leadership and recommendations by Joe Ferris and Don Sul proved invaluable as staff began to write a software package that would create a computer based systems program to receive and manage for tracking, retrieval and filing information of all activity that the Department has jurisdiction and responsibility over.

While the system platform is based on standard or "canned" software (Microsoft Access) it has been modified to fit the chronological, financial, and review responsibilities of the Department.

The management system which is called Permit Tracking includes the following:

1. Project I.D. Number.
2. Project Date.
3. Project Location.
4. Project Start and End Dates.
5. Zoning Classification.
6. Staff involved in the project review/inspection/completion including consultants.
7. Project status.
8. Comments.
9. Project history.
10. Surety, bond, fee requirements, receipts, invoicing, and update.
11. Water/Sewer (engineering) invoicing.
12. Compilation of Township wide development lists that can be generated by zoning, case number, project, customer, and status.

During development of the Permit Tracking System, the Departments of Development, Treasury, and Water and Sewer Operations all participated. This joint effort made possible a product and tool that will serve staff and customers. I want to thank all involved for their teamwork and participation. Within the next 90 days the system should be up and running and available for all who are interested to stop by and see it in action.

Bryce Kelley
Director of Planning & Economic Development

SNOW REMOVAL FOR RESIDENTIAL ROADWAYS

The new residential developments in the Township are certainly bright and festive as we approach the holiday season. Just as colorful are the Christmas and holiday greeting cards marking

the season with wonderful renderings of snow covered trees, lawns and **ROADS:**

This brings me right to the point of my article, snow on your roads, or more accurately, the removal of snow from your roads. There are three types of residential developments in the Township; platted subdivisions, detached condominiums, and attached condominiums. The process does vary among the three.

Roadways in platted subdivisions in the Township are build to Wayne County standards. Once a subdivision is completed the County inspects the roadways and ultimately takes ownership of the roads, which includes complete responsibility for maintenance, repairs, and snow removal. However prior to acceptance by the County the maintenance, repair, and snow removal are the responsibility of the developer, builder, or homeowners' association. Please check with your developer/builder or association to determine whether or not your subdivision's roads have been accepted by Wayne County. If the roads have not been taken over by Wayne County find out what the plan is for your specific development. If Wayne County has assumed jurisdiction of your roads be aware that the County's order of snow removal priorities are State Highways (I-275 & I-94), primary roads (Michigan Ave., Ecorse & Belleville Roads), secondary roads (i.e. Hull, Elwell, Beck Roads) and then subdivision roadways.

Roadways in detached and attached condo developments in the Township are all under the jurisdiction of either the developer/builder or the condominium association. Again, please check with your particular developer/builder or association to determine what plans are in place to clear snow from the roads. In attached condominium developments your sidewalks and driveways may also be part of the snow removal agreement. If you have questions, check your association's bylaws and master deed to determine precisely the scope, responsibility and administration of snow removal activities.

If you have additional questions or are still unsure you can reach Wayne County through the Road Division's website, or 1-800-ROAD CREW. If you still can't seem to get a clear understanding of your particular situation call the Department at (734) 699-8913.

Belleville Area Museum
405 Main Street

Open Noon to 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday through Sunday
Closed Holiday Weekends

Tours By Appointment (734) 697-1944

Adults - \$1.00
Family - \$3.00
Children - 50 cents

SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

Continued from Page Two

As you may know, Van Buren was honored recently for our efforts to provide quality recreational programming. The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness awarded Van Buren a Level 3 award (out of a possible 5 levels) which was quite an honor considering it was the first time we had made application to the Council. Bruce Ross, Recreation and Facilities Director, was further honored this fall winning a national award from the National Recreation and Parks Association for his contributions toward his profession. Thanks, Bruce, for making Van Buren look good!

Lastly, after considerable deliberation, the Board approved acceptance of a grant from the United States Department of Justice to place law enforcement personnel in the schools in a position entitled "School Resource Officer" (SRO). While similar positions exist throughout the country, this is a new endeavor for both the Van Buren Public Schools and the township and it is our expectation the SRO will be an effective tool in providing mentoring to our youth, personal safety and proactive public safety techniques in our schools.

In closing, I wish you the best of holidays and a new year of joy and peace. Van Buren Park is open throughout the winter months so if you enjoy the outdoors and snow, a visit to this beautiful park will be worth your time.

**TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS
A HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE**

If you remember shopping at the stores which once lined Belleville's Main Street, be sure to visit the latest exhibit at the Belleville Area Museum. Entitled "Taking Care of Business," the exhibit features artifacts from oldtime community businesses including restaurants, gas stations, funeral chapels, and hardware stores. Photographs of several long-vanished local businesses are on display throughout the museum.

Highlight of the display is a replica of a 1940's/1950's dime store. Items on exhibit include a collection of aprons, handkerchiefs, and ladies' gloves, children's toys, and old-time cleaning supplies, including Fels Naptha soap and laundry bluing. The dime store also includes a restaurant complete with jukebox! Museum visitors can even purchase some traditional five and ten cent items from a "sidewalk sale" in front of the dime store.

Featured in the exhibit are several items from Hamilton Hardware, a business operated by the Hamilton family from 1927 to 1986, as well as artifacts from the former medical practice of family physician Dr. Herbert Robb. The carriage and auto sales business of the Sumpter Randall family is also highlighted in the display.

Also on exhibit is a small replica of the Wabash Depot which formerly stood on Sumpter Road next to the railroad tracks. The depot displays railroad memorabilia.

Diane Wilson
Museum Director

**2003 HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CALENDAR**

It's not too late to pick up a copy of the 2003 Historical Society Calendar. Coinciding with the museum's current exhibit "Taking Care of Business: A History of Community Enterprise," the theme of the calendar is old-time local businesses. Each month features a full-page historic photograph of a former business, including Hamilton Hardware, Huron Valley Dairy, and the Patterson grocery and gas station. The calendars are published as a fund raiser for the Belleville Area Museum and are sold for \$6.00 each.

If you wish to place an order by mail, please call the museum at (734) 697-1944.



Mother/Daughter Tea Party

Saturday, May 3
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

To celebrate that special bond between mother and daughter, come join us for our 2nd annual mother/daughter tea party. Held at the Van Buren Community Center, mothers and daughters will take part in tea and sandwiches while enjoying entertainment. Door prizes will be given as well.

Van Buren Residents = \$10.00 per couple
Non-Residents = \$15.00 per couple

\$3.00 for each additional child

INSIDE THE PARKS

VBTV 12



A winter view of Van Buren Park

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to those members of the community I have not had a chance to meet yet. Since my arrival we have been able to hit the ground running on several improvements to the parks. The resources in this community are abundant and growing. The reality is that having nice parks with a number of recreational activities raises property values and creates a safer and more attractive place to live.

When planning your picnic in the spring you will find that all the pavilions in Van Buren Park are now paved. This includes the large shelter in the back loop of the park that will no doubt become the most sought after picnic spot due to its size and scenic overlook. The addition of a second playstructure in the back loop being built with Community Block Grant funds will only serve to further enhance that area of the park development. Van Buren Park has tremendous potential, and improvements will continue to be made so we can reach it.

French Landing is another park receiving some needed attention. Measures are being taken to provide greater visibility into the park so as to create greater security and beautify the existing features. French Landing will also be getting a new play structure using Community Development Block Grant Funds. I suspect it won't be long before French Landing will be a popular spot for families.

The Quirk Park development is coming along nicely and will provide a premier location for soccer and family recreation for years to come. This park is a sign to me that Van Buren is serious about providing recreational opportunities that a growing community needs. The importance of developments like these cannot be overstated in the enrichment of a community.

It's great to be aboard, and I look forward to 2003 and the great things that are happening in the parks.

Vincent Averill
Parks Manager

As we continue to cover township events, the cable department is looking forward to updating our boardroom cameras. For those that attend or watch our board meetings, in our board room we have four cameras installed in the room that are controlled from a different location in the building that allow us to broadcast the meetings, live, to your television sets at home. Although these old cameras have served us well, it's time for a change. As we try to improve the quality of our work, we need to complement our skills with proper equipment. Purchase and installation of the new cameras should take place either late December or early January. During installation we do not anticipate any missed broadcast of any Township Board Meetings. Early 2003, viewers will soon experience a different kind of perspective when you watch coverage of our Township Board Meetings.

Along with our continuous live coverage of our bi-monthly Board meetings, we are also covering various events in the township including holiday festivities around the area. As usual we also have our regular program line-up such as the Belleville Area Chamber of Commerce show with Janet Millard, MDOT Today, and Michigan Historical Society Meetings, just to name a few.

Please take some time to watch us at VBTV 12. We have our bulletin information board which runs twenty-four hours a day whenever a program is not airing, or check us out at the Township website (www.vanburen-mi.org) for program dates and times, and other township information regarding our community.

On behalf of our department, we wish everybody a merry and safe holiday and a joyful new year.

Ally Acosta
Cable Operations Manager

FIRE FIGHTERS WANTED!!

The Van Buren Fire Department is looking for men and women who would enjoy the challenge of serving our community as on-call (part-time) fire fighters. If you are:



- Over the age of eighteen**
- A high school graduate**
- Possess a valid Michigan Driver's License**



Please stop by the Public Safety Department's Records window and pick up an application.

For more information, please call (734) 699-8930.

VAN BUREN FIRE DEPARTMENT AWARDED FEMA GRANT

On November 15th, the Fire Department was notified that it had been awarded a grant under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) "2002 Assistance of Firefighters Grant Program." The federal award of \$163,304.00, coupled with the Township's commitment of \$18,144.00, will be used to purchase new turn-out gear (firefighting helmets, coats, pants, boots, etc.) for all of Van Buren's fire fighters. The grant will also purchase a thermal imaging camera, portable radios, self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and hazardous materials protective suits. The 90% federal/10% local funding ratio is FEMA's formula for a community of our size. One of the few mandates of the grant is that it be used to acquire equipment that meets or exceeds the current safety standards designed to maximize fire fighter safety and effectiveness while performing their dangerous duties.

Some of our community's unique features (Belleville Lake, I-94, I-275, rapid growth, and key local industries) were recognized by FEMA's assessment team as criteria that qualified Van Buren as a grant recipient. We are proud of our Fire Department's efforts to obtain this grant and happy that FEMA has recognized Van Buren's special needs in their first year of this important program.

Al Smolen
Deputy Director of Public Safety

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING SEWER BACKUPS OR BASEMENT FLOODING CLAIMS

Michigan statute, Act 222 Acts of 2001*, clarifies municipal liability for sewer backups. A key provision of the statute requires that a person seeking compensation for property damage or physical injury must file a written claim within 45 days of the event.

If you experience an overflow or backup of sewage disposal system or storm water system, you must file a written claim with the Van Buren Township Water Department within 45 days after the overflow or backup was discovered. Notice must be mailed to Van Buren Township Water Department, 46425 Tyler Road, Van Buren, MI 48111. Failure to provide the required notice will prevent recovery of damages.

Contact the Van Buren Water Department at (734) 699-8925 immediately upon discovery of an overflow or backup. Like you, the Water Department considers a sewer backup or basement flooding an emergency, and will respond to your call day or night, holidays and weekends.

*The full text of P.A. 222 of 2001 is available on our web site: www.vanburen-mi.org under Departments, Water and Sewer or copies are available upon request by calling (734) 699-8925.

A COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



Van Buren Public Safety Dispatch Center

A Communications Officer at Van Buren Township encompasses many different avenues of communication. Not only are you a Police Dispatcher, but you are a 9-1-1 call taker, a Fire Department Dispatcher, and an EMS Dispatcher. While handling all of that you must also handle the numerous telephone calls, the radio traffic requests from the police officers, run the computers in dispatch, handle the public that walks in the front door, and sometimes tend to the needs of the prisoners. As you can see, a Communications Officer needs to be a multi-talented person.

Sometimes being a Communications Officer can be a very satisfying position because you are in touch with every call that comes in, from the simplest call to the most intense call. Things can change drastically at any moment of the day or night. One moment things could be calm and the next moment there could be five different emergencies all happening at the same time and in different parts of the township. At times, a Communications officer can feel totally helpless as the incident unfolds. Constant training and updated equipment help the Communications Officer maintain composure and confidence, and put him/her in control of the situation.

Thinking fast and being able to handle multiple tasks is a must. Sometimes all of our resources are needed at a scene. Take for example, a house fire with a report of victims trapped inside. Not only is the Fire Department dispatched for the obvious, the police must also be dispatched for traffic control, criminal investigation, crowd control, or to assist the Fire Department. EMS will also have to be called to the scene to render medical care to the victims or injured firefighters or police. The utility companies will have to be contacted so they can come out and shut off the appropriate utilities. Finally, while all of this is going on the media is often calling to check on the newsworthy story.

As a Communications Officer, your adrenaline rises and falls with every call and the calls vary from moment to moment. This tends to create stress and you must learn how to deal with it and relax. Somedays there might not be a problem anywhere in the township, then an officer makes a "routine" traffic stop and the next thing you hear come across the radio is "radio the vehicle is not stopping and I am in pursuit." You go from calm, cool and collected to monitoring the locations they reach and contacting the neighboring agencies for assistance.

Believe it or not, sometimes this is all done with one Communications Officer. So, the next time you call if the person you are talking to is "to the point," please keep mind that the person you are talking to might have several emergencies going on. All of our Communications Officers are thoroughly trained and go through a three-month mentoring period then a one-year probation. Van Buren Township has gone through many changes in the past twenty years and has become a prominent community in Western Wayne County, our Department of Public Safety will always try to stay in step with the changes. Our Communications Officers consider it to be an honor and privilege to serve the citizens of Van Buren Township.

Bill Gage
Communications Officer

REFLECTIONS FROM ONE OF VAN BUREN'S NEWEST FIRE FIGHTERS

It's early evening on a Saturday, but it could have been anytime or any day for that matter. I find both my mind and heart racing as I concentrate on the task at hand. The drone of the engine is only barely audible between the radio blare and the scream of the sirens as we race through the township. A voice from the other side of the cab informs me that I'm on the first suppression team and that I will be following him into the structure. At that moment the chaos gives way to order as I recall my training and experience with the department. Once the engine reaches the fire ground, each member of the crew immediately embarks on his duty. Within a matter of minutes the fire is extinguished, property loss contained and no loss of life or injury. From a firefighter's perspective it was a successful night, we put the fire out and all returned home safely to our families.

However, the positive outcome of this incident and many others like it is by no means a random event. The amount of hard work and dedication of each and every firefighter in the department is a significant factor in being prepared for such and event. All firefighters spend a minimum of one year on

probation. During that time the probationary firefighter is tasked with several requirements that he or she must fulfill. During the first year probationary firefighters are required to learn station duties, apparatus, equipment, learn standard operating procedures and participate in monthly training exercises. In addition each probationary firefighter must attend the fire academy, gain certification as a medical first responder, learn the code of conduct and spend time with the dispatchers.

This may sound like a tremendous workload but this type of work lends itself to many rewards. Working at this level as part of a team tends to bring the firefighters into a close-knit group. The work is very interesting and offers something new on a daily basis. Through the training process, probationary firefighters gain the skill and confidence necessary to deal with just about any situation. Also, training is continually offered to refresh firefighters' skill sets as well as introduce new techniques to the team. Plus, the township encourages advanced training and certification in highly specialized fire service areas. Being a paid on-call firefighter is one of the most challenging and rewarding career decisions that I have ever made and would strongly urge others to come forward and join the team.

Robert Wilkins
VBFD, Probationary Fire Fighter

CELL PHONE USAGE TIED TO DEADLIER ROADWAYS

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar
Los Angeles Times 12/02/02
Reprinted with permission

The death toll from crashes caused by drivers talking on their wireless phones appears to be rising significantly as the devices become a must-have accessory for many Americans.

A study being released today by Harvard University's Center for Risk Analysis estimates a rate of 2,600 deaths a year in such crashes, compared with the center's estimate of 1,000 fatalities only two years ago. "The amount of time people spend using their cell phones while driving has increased, probably reflecting the fact that it is becoming cheaper to use the devices," said research scientist Joshua Cohen, the study's author. The Harvard study also estimated that 570,000 injuries a year and 1.5 million crashes resulting in property damage

CELL PHONE USAGE
Continued on Page Eleven

ICE SAFETY TIPS

“Is the ice safe yet?” -- “No, ice is NEVER safe.”

Realizing that statement is usually misunderstood as bureaucratic (and relatively evasive), even if ice is a foot thick in one area on a lake, it can be one inch thick just a few yards away. Here are a few general guidelines for use by winter recreation enthusiasts to lessen their chances for an icy dip or worse. It's impossible to judge the strength of ice by its appearance, thickness, daily temperature, or snow cover alone. Ice strength is actually dependent on all four factors, plus water depth under the ice, the size of the water and water chemistry, currents, and distribution of the load on the ice.

- Wait to walk out on the ice until there are at least 4 inches of clear, solid ice. Thinner ice will support one person, but since ice thickness can vary considerably, especially at the beginning and end of the season, 4 inches will provide a margin of safety. Some factors that can change ice thickness include flocks of waterfowl and schools of fish. By congregating in a small area, fish can cause warmer water from the bottom towards the surface, weakening or in some cases opening large holes in the ice.
- Go out with a buddy and keep a good distance apart as you walk out. If one of you goes in the other can call for help (it's amazing how many people carry cellular phones these days). The companion can also attempt a rescue if one of you are carrying rope or other survival gear.
- Snowmobiles and ATV's need at least 5 inches, and cars and light trucks need at least 8-12 inches of good clear ice.
- Contact a local resort or bait shop for information about known thin ice areas.
- Wear a life jacket. Life vests or float coats provide excellent floatation and protection from hypothermia (loss of body temperature). Never wear a life jacket if you are traveling in an enclosed vehicle, however. It could hamper escape in case of a breakthrough.
- Carry a pair of homemade ice picks or even a pair of screwdrivers tied together with a few yards of strong cord that can be used to pull yourself up and onto the ice if you do fall in. Be sure they have wooden handles so if you drop them in the struggle to get out of the water, they won't go straight to the bottom!
- Check at the access if there are signs that indicate an aeration system is in operation on the lake. Aerators keep areas of water open to provide oxygen for fish. The ice can be weakened many yards beyond where the ice is actually open. Stay well outside the fenced areas indicated by diamond shaped thin ice signs.

- Above all, avoid alcoholic beverages. Beer and booze increase your chances for hypothermia and increase the likelihood that you'll make a stupid mistake that will cost you or a companion their life. Having taken all of these precautions, you're now going to try your luck at fishing. Walking out on the ice, you hear a crack and break through. Suddenly you find yourself immersed up to your neck in water so cold it takes your breath away. If you think that's no big deal, try holding your hands in a bucket of ice water for more than a couple of minutes. If you can do it without extreme pain, you are tougher than the average person.
- Try not to panic. Of course that's easier said than done, but if you decide on a plan before you actually fall in, survival chances are greatly improved.

Christopher L. Elg
Director of Public Safety

FIRE DEPARTMENT SAFETY TIPS AND POLAR PLUNGE

With winter now upon us and with Michigan weather conditions, we all have to take the time to be more careful when on ice. The Van Buren Fire Department has provided the following tips for your safety when doing activities on ice.

- If you are going out on the ice, make sure you tell someone when, where, and what time you will be home.
- Dress for the weather, wind chills out on the open ice can become dangerous, dress in layers.
- Never go out on the ice alone, have a friend with you at all times.

For all of you “thrill-seekers” who want to know what it's really like in icy cold water, come out and support the Special Olympics on February 22nd, 2003 for the annual Polar Plunge. For more information regarding ice safety or the Polar Plunge, contact Inspector Anthony Karver (734) 699-8930 ext. 237.

Anthony Karver
Fire Inspector

Please call 9-1-1 **ONLY** if there is an
EMERGENCY!

For all non-emergencies,
please call (734) 699-8930.

CELL PHONE USAGE

Continued from Page Nine

can be blamed on wireless-phone use. The study will feed into a national debate that pits personal freedom and convenience against safety concerns.

Two federal agencies have recently stepped up efforts to understand how wireless-phone use may contribute to accidents. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating wireless phones as a potential contributing factor in several recent serious crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is launching a study of how wireless-phone use affects individual drivers, using the government's driving-simulator facility in Iowa.

Nationwide, there is no uniform measure for tracking accidents in which wireless-phone use may have been a factor. The Harvard study used mathematical models to estimate the risk of injury and death as well as the costs and benefits of using wireless phones while driving. The risk-analysis center is part of Harvard's School of Public Health. The study concluded that the escalating costs of wireless phone-related accidents are erasing the economic benefits of unrestricted use of the devices by drivers.

"The risk is growing, but the benefits are not keeping up," Cohen said. Such conclusions could bolster the case for restricting wireless-phone use by drivers. This year, at least 22 states considered legislation to restrict wireless-phone use while driving, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. So far, only New York has enacted a partial prohibition; it does not allow drivers to use handheld phones. New Yorkers may use devices adapted for hands-free use, which are usually voice-activated and come with an earpiece and microphone. It is too early to tell whether New York's law, which went into effect last year, is saving lives. A preliminary study indicated that the law had changed the behavior of motorists and that use of handheld phones appeared to be down by about 50 percent.

Wireless-phone use is by no means the biggest menace on the roads. Alcoholic related crashes accounted for 17,448 deaths last year, while accidents involving speeding took 12,850 lives, according to federal statistics. But much less is known about the link between wireless-phone use and crashes than about the effects of alcohol or speeding. In most states, accident-report forms used by police do not collect information on whether drivers were on the phone.

The wireless-phone industry - which has more than 128 million customers - has refused to turn over customer records that would allow researchers to determine whether drivers were on the phone at the time of an accident. A 1997 study of Canadian drivers who agreed to have their wireless-phone records scrutinized found that the risk of an accident was four times greater while a driver was using the phone.

CELL PHONE SAFETY

Studies show that talking on a cell phone in a moving vehicle quadruples the risk of collision. Safe driving requires caution, courtesy, common sense and alertness under any traffic condition.

To improve concentration while driving with a cell phone:

- Place calls while stopped or have someone dial for you.
- Use the cell phone in the 'hands-free' mode. Keep in mind, though, that 'hands-free' is not always 'risk-free'.
- Avoid intense or complicated conversations. The more complex the conversation, the higher the level of distraction.

Some other safety tips for cell phone users include:

- Always buckle up.
- Always assess traffic conditions before placing a call.
- Give driving your full attention. Driver inattention is estimated to be a factor in 25-50 percent of all highway collisions.
- Ensure that the phone is within easy reach.
- Use 'memory dial' to minimize dialing time. Do not take notes or look up phone numbers while driving.

Anything that's a distraction -- a passenger, radio, CD player or cellular phone -- interferes with the driver's concentration. Hi-tech or low-tech, keep your attention on the road.

This information is provided by AAA of Michigan and the Van Buren Department of Public Safety.

STATEWIDE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT REPORT DATA PROBLEM ANALYSIS

OVERALL

In 2001, 1,328 persons were killed, 10,530 were seriously injured and 112,292 people were injured to some lesser extent in traffic crashes in Michigan.

From 2000 to 2001, fatalities decreased 4 percent, injuries decreased 8.49 percent and total reported crashes decreased 5.66 percent.

In 2001, a total of 2,059 drivers were involved in fatal crashes, 13.4 percent were under 21 years of age and 22 percent were under 25 years of age.

STATEWIDE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT DATA

Continued on Page Twenty

Wine & Food Pairing

Have you ever wondered how to really appreciate the taste of wine? Come to the Belleville Bayou Grill to learn all this information and more. Chef Ernest O. Prokos of the Bayou Grill and other wine experts will demonstrate the techniques for experiencing wine while indulging in samples of diverse food.

Thursdays, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

March 27

April 24

May 29



Held at the Bayou Grill in Belleville located at 404 Main Street. Please register at the Township Hall.

\$30.00 per class



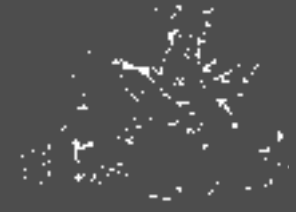
Cooking Demonstrations

Second Thursday of the month
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

March 13

April 10

May 8



Must pre-pay at the recreation department. You will not be able to participate in this class if you have not pre-registered and pre-paid with the recreation department. Classes are held at the Belleville Bayou Grill. The Belleville Bayou Grill will not be accepting any payments for the class.

\$25.00 per person

Crappie USA

Introducing the Crappie USA Fishing Tournament.

May 3, 2003 on Belleville and Ford Lakes.

Registration and seminar is May 2 at Cabela's in Dundee, Michigan. Sign up starts at 5:00 p.m.

Tournament hours on May 3: 6:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Amateur division = \$75.00 per team

Semi-pro division = \$205.00 per team

A free youth fishing event will be held on the same day.

Registration at 8:00 a.m., event starts at 9:00 a.m.

Dulcimer Lessons Part II

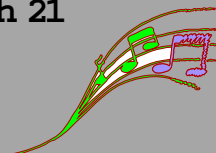
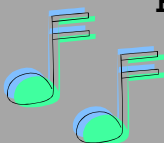
Have you ever wanted to learn how to play a musical instrument? Van Buren Community Center is offering a class for beginner mountain dulcimer II. These charming American folk instruments have a sweet sound and are very easy to play. The instructor has been playing for 30 years and teaching for 15 years. We will review very basic skills learned in mountain dulcimer, and learn more tunes and techniques. Dulcimers are available for \$47 each. Please order two weeks in advance of the class.

Fridays, January 24 - March 21

(No Class February 14)

7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Eight week class = \$135.00



Kids Mardi Gras Gala

Parents want a night alone? Bring your kids to us because we are celebrating Mardi Gras! Kids will enjoy dancing, food and crafts. We will hand out the traditional Mardi Gras beads and masks.



Saturday, March 1

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Kids must range in ages 8 - 15

\$10 - resident per kid

\$15 - non-resident per kid

Up, Up & Away!! Father/Son Model Airplane Workshop Day



Saturday, March 8
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Fathers and sons get lost in flight as you create your own model airplane to take home. **Lunch and model airplanes are provided.** Bring your own materials if desired.

\$5.00 - per couple
\$2.00 - each additional child



Gymnastics

Saturdays



Tot Tumbling Ages: 4-6	Jan 11 - Feb 22
	No Class February 8
11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	
11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Van Buren Residents = \$45
12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Non-Residents = \$60
Beginners Ages: 7 and up	Jan 11 - Feb 15
1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Van Buren Residents = \$50
2:15 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Non-Residents = \$65
Intermediate Ages: 7 and up	Jan 11 - Feb 15
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Van Buren Residents = \$55
	Non-Residents = \$70

Babysitter Certification Class

Learn the proper techniques of babysitting from the American Red Cross. Must attend the entire session to receive babysitter's ARC certification.



Fridays, April 4 & 11
5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.



Ages: 11 and up - **NO EXCEPTIONS!!**

Van Buren Registration = \$60 Non-Residents = \$75

K-9 Obedience Klass

Join dog trainer of 40 years experience, Lila Warner, for six weeks of one on one training. What to bring: Bring Fido, a training collar and a six-foot leash.

We teach you to train your own pet under our supervision. Must bring proof of rabies, distemper, & a recent proof of negative fecal report to the first class and register at the Van Buren Community Center.

All classes are held at Belleville High School (Small Gym)



Tuesdays, February 4 - March 11
Tuesdays, March 18 - April 22
Tuesdays, April 29 - June 3

7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

\$25.00 per dog

Line Dancing

Come check out Instructor Ron Kline as he shows you the latest moves and grooves in line dancing from an assortment of music. This is a great opportunity to socialize with others. Comfortable shoes required, partners are not.

2nd Tuesday of every month
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Van Buren Residents = \$5 Non-Residents = \$6

Scrapbook Making Workshop



Saturdays, January 18 & 25
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
\$15 - per class



Wednesdays, Jan 29 & Feb 5
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
\$10 - per class

Beginners, advanced and children scrapbookers are welcome. Bring your photos. Beginners will receive all of the items to complete their first page and to get started in scrap booking.

Cinco De Mayo Celebration!

Cinco De Mayo, a day Mexicans celebrate their independence is being commemorated at the Van Buren Community Center. Kids can come to the Community Center to make crafts of the Mexican culture as well as enjoy Mexican music and food.

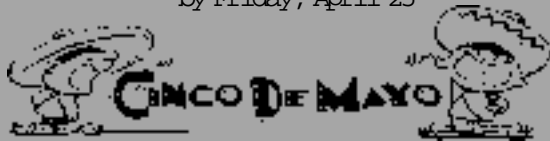
Sunday, May 4
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Ages: 7-12

Van Buren Resident = \$10.00 per child
\$8.00 each additional child

Non-Residents = \$15.00 per child
\$13.00 each additional child

Pre-registration is required
by Friday, April 25



2nd Annual Ladies' Superbowl Sunday Shindig

Others can watch the Superbowl while you and your daughter, mother, grandmother, aunt, girlfriend etc... watch the movie, "Matilda".

Sunday, January 26
6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

This event is held at the Van Buren Community Center. It's a free event for those that enjoy just hanging out with the girls.

Bring a snack to share or take pleasure in the Community Center's snacks.

Saturday Night Dance Parties

Come and dance the night away.



January 25

February 22

March 29

April 26

May 31



Dance Lessons: 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Dancing: 8:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.

\$4.00 Lessons per person
\$7.00 Dancing per person

Enjoy FREE snacks and great dancing, please bring your own refreshments.

NO alcoholic beverages!!

Spring Softball Registration

Softball starts the week of May 5

Leagues are as follows:

Tuesday Recreational = \$430 2 umpires
Wednesday Competitive = \$430 2 umpires
Friday Co-Ed = \$390 1 umpire

A \$40 refundable forfeit is included in price.

A \$50 late fee will apply if league money is not turned in by Friday April 18.

Games start at 6:15 p.m. each night.

Games are played at the Van Buren Softball Field.

All managers are encouraged to attend manager's meeting in April.

Managers will be notified the date of meeting.

Rules and regulations will be changing and we need your input.

Booklovers Journey

Families sign up to take a trip Saturday, March 22 to the surrounding libraries. We will visit the Belleville Library, Canton Library and the new Ypsilanti Township Library. All of these libraries will offer you something different. If you haven't visited any of these libraries before you will be pleasantly surprised. We will spend 30 minutes to an hour at each library. After we have finished exploring we will head back to the Community Center to enjoy pizza and pop.



\$2.00 per person

Pre-register by Monday, March 17

We will leave the community center at 11:00 a.m.

Reading Warriors

Prepare for battle...! Arm yourself with books and become a member of our Reading Warriors Program. Celebrate March as reading month by taking the challenge to read 300 minutes. This family event is for all ages. Youth can earn points by reading on their own and by listening to parents read. Points can also be earned by attending story times at the local library. To make this event a true battle, we will compete with Ypsilanti Township Recreation Department to see who accumulates the most hours read. The program will begin March 1st and end March 26. Please register for this program so we have a count of those participating. When you register pick up a form that will help you keep track of how many hours you have read.

Finally, join us Saturday, March 29th from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. for the "Reading Warriors Reward Day". Come to the Ypsilanti Community Center to celebrate with both Van Buren Parks and Recreation Department and Ypsilanti Township Parks and Recreation. Enjoy pizza and a storyteller.

\$5.00 - per family for the "Reading Warriors Reward Day" only.

Mask Puppet Theatre



(in honor of Reading Month)



Bring the entire family to the Mask Puppet Theatre Reading show.

Thursday, March 20 7:00 p.m.

FREE! FREE! FREE! - Pre-registration is desired.



Family Movie Night

(in honor of Reading Month)

Bring the family and enjoy movies on the big screen. The popcorn and punch will be waiting.

"The Never Ending Story" PG



Friday, March 14
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



FREE! FREE! FREE!



Family Outing

Snow's Sugarbush Farm

Come learn how maple syrup is created. We will eat at Snow's Country Restaurant for breakfast. Snow's Country Restaurant features: "All You Can Eat" Home Cooking. Pancakes, french toast, waffles, sausage and of course served with Snow's own maple syrup.

Saturday, February 22

We will leave from the Community Center at 7:30 a.m. so we can arrive in Mason early to see how the syrup is created.

\$3.00 per person transportation fee
Pay for meal at Snow's Country Restaurant

Echo Valley, Michigan's Premier Winter Sports Park

Saturday, January 25

We will venture to Echo Valley where you will find a toboggan run, ice-skating and tubing. The day is yours and you decide what activities you want to do.

Pay at Echo Valley - Prices are as follows:

- Tobogganing = \$9.00 all day
- Tubing = \$9.00 all day
- Daily Combo = \$15.00 (tobogganing & tubing)
- Skating = \$5.00 all day (skates are available)

Bring extra money for food and beverages, which are available in the warming lodge.

Pre-register by Monday, January 20, a nonrefundable \$1.00 per person is required to register.

We will leave the Community Center at 10:00 a.m.

2003 Marshmallow Drop

Saturday, April 12

Rain-out date: Sunday, April 13

Cost: \$1.00 per child

Thousands of marshmallows will be dropped from a helicopter to be turned in for a bag filled with candy!

- 1st Drop: Walking Toddlers - 4 yrs. - 10:00 a.m.
- 2nd Drop: 5-7 yrs. - 10 min after the 1st drop
- 3rd Drop: 8-10 yrs. - 10 min after the 2nd drop

**** Times are approximate****

Held at the Van Buren Township Softball Field

Mother/Son Dance (Sports Rally)



Friday, May 9
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Van Buren Recreation Center presents its 7th annual Mother/Son Dance. This year the theme will be Sports Rally. Wear your favorite sports team outfit. Enjoy games, food and dancing. Sports apparel is desired but not required.

Van Buren Residents = \$10 per couple
Non-Residents = \$15 per couple

\$3.00 each additional child



Walk Michigan

Wednesdays, May 7 - August 6
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

We have added evening hours for those who can't make the morning times.

However, just like last year you can only walk up to 3 miles each Wednesday. We will meet at the picnic area by the pool at Lower Huron Metropark.

Person who walks the most wins a trip to Mackinac Island.

There is a fee to enter the park.

Battle of the Bands

Calling all local high schools bands! Van Buren Township Recreation Department is looking for high school bands to compete in a fun, mind-blowing, competition in May.

Bands turn in CD's or tapes to the Van Buren Recreation Department by Monday, March 3rd so we can determine what bands will compete in the Battle of the Bands in May. There is no fee to compete however the day of the event there will be a fee to enter the show.

Frankenmuth Family Fun Tour

The Van Buren Community Center is taking a trip up to Frankenmuth, Michigan. We will leave the Community Center at 9:00 a.m. Once we arrive in Frankenmuth, the day is yours. You and your family can venture around the streets of Frankenmuth. Enjoy shops, entertainment and food. It will be a fun filled trip for people of all ages.

Saturday, April 5
9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Transportation is: \$5.00 per adult
 \$3.00 for (17 and under)

Bring extra money for food and souvenirs. Let us do the driving and you do the fun!

Black History Month Festivities

Back by popular demand... **LaRon Williams, storyteller**

Friday, February 21
7:00 p.m.

FREE!!!

Light refreshments to follow.

The African Museum Trip

Saturday, February 23
Leave Community Center at 1:00 p.m.

\$7.00 - adults \$5.00 - children 17 & under

After eat at Fishbone's Rythem Cafe.
 Pay at restaurant.

Pre-register by Friday, February 14.

Free Family Movie Night

"Remember the Titans" PG

Friday, February 28 at 7:00 p.m.

Enjoy popcorn and punch.

Managing Your Money Workshop

Saving money for the future of your children? Do you need some guidance on how to save for their college fund? Rafael Olvera, a Financial Consultant will be offering FREE workshops for you to attend. Also, Rafael Olvera will offer a FREE funding analysis for college education for your children.

Workshops are:



"Smart Women Finish Rich" by Mary Kay Hamilton
Saturday, January 25 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 22 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 29 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 26 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

FREE!! FREE!! FREE!!

This workshop is geared toward parents with children under the age of ten.

Tots of Fun

"Tots of Fun" is an opportunity for children to expand their motor and social skills all within a safe and fun environment. This is a drop-in nonstructural playtime for children. An adult or guardian who may enter for free must accompany all children.

Mondays and Wednesdays
 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Ages: Infant to 5 years

Van Buren Community Center
(Gymnasium)



Van Buren Residents = \$2.00
 Non-Residents = \$3.00



RECREATION PROGRAM

Continued on Page Twenty

Rouge River Watershed 2003 Frog and Toad Survey Training Workshop

Help monitor the health of the Rouge River by listening for frogs and toads in your neighborhood. It's easy, fun, and important to the future of our environment.

To participate, attend ONE training workshop where you will get everything that you need to survey. Call (313) 792-9621 or e-mail picoordinator@therouge.org to register. (Workshop is free but pre-registration is required)

Saturday, March 8 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Van Buren Township Hall
46425 Tyler Road

ADDITIONAL SESSIONS IN OTHER COMMUNITIES:

Saturday, February 15 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Bailey Center, 36651 Ford Road, Westland

Monday, February 17 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Cranbrook Institute of Science
39221 Woodward Avenue, Bloomfield Hills

Wednesday, March 5 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Novi Civic Center, 45175 West Ten Mile Road, Novi

Co-sponsored by Friends of the Rouge, Van Buren Township, and the Lower 1 Subwatershed Advisory Group. Supported, in part, by a grant from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Program.