



ARF trims nearly 60 dogs' nails at clinic...

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75¢



Three Rivers COMMERCIAL-NEWS

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County parks director named

MacDonald to lead department

By Rick Cordes Staff Writer

CENTREVILLE — Jaymes MacDonald of Three Rivers has been named the new director of the St. Joseph County Parks and Recreation Department and will begin his duties on Dec. 2.



MacDonald currently is the Michigan DNR park officer for Warren Dunes State Park in Sawyer, Mich., with responsibilities to oversee administrative, security and maintenance duties there as well as being lead ranger for Grand Mere and Warren Woods state parks and supervisor of 58 access sites.

"I've worked for the DNR for a couple of seasons and have a well-rounded background suited for being the director of parks and recreation," MacDonald said, indicating that he is

See PARKS DIRECTOR, page 3

Man accused of attempted murder

Attacks brother in Sturgis Township

By Rick Cordes Staff Writer

CENTREVILLE — A 49-year-old Bronson man has been charged with

attempted murder stemming from an alleged Sunday evening attack on his brother at a Sturgis Township residence in the 70000 block of Balk Road.

Daniel Lee Thomas was arrested following the incident in which he is accused of assaulting Randy Thomas with the intent to commit murder.

Additionally, Daniel Thomas is

charged with first-degree home invasion, assault with a dangerous weapon, fourth-degree fleeing of a police officer, two counts of resisting and obstructing a police officer, one felony firearms count, one count of carrying a concealed weapon and one count of discharge of a firearm in a building.

Thomas was arraigned in St. Joseph

County District Court Monday afternoon and his bond was set by Magistrate Mark Books at \$500,000 cash/surety. Thomas remains lodged in the St. Joseph County Jail and faces up to life in prison if convicted of the attempted murder charge.

Rick Cordes can be reached at 279-7488 ext. 23 or rick@threeriversnews.com.

Caswell, Lori feted at open house

Outgoing legislators visit TR

By Rick Cordes Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — Both state legislators who serve Three Rivers and St. Joseph County were on hand for a thank-you-for-your-service open house at the Three Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce Monday afternoon.

59th District state representative Matt Lori and 16th District state senator Bruce Caswell greeted well-wishers and offered comments as they head into lame duck session in the Michigan Legislature.

Lori, who is term-limited and is

See OPEN HOUSE, page 3



Farewell to Three Rivers

State Senator Bruce Caswell, left, converses with Three Rivers Health CEO Bill Russell during a farewell open house Monday afternoon at the Three Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce office.

Commercial-News/Elena Hines

African-American World War II veteran recalls Nazi horrors and combat in Europe

By William Allen Baltz Special to the Commercial-News

THREE RIVERS — Ervin C. Haithcock, 93, will never forget that sinister place — one of the most horrendous examples of man's inhumanity to man in modern times, perhaps all time.

"There was a big building and inside there were dead bodies stacked one on top of the other, just skin and bones with no clothes," relates the long-time Three Rivers resident with a mixture of anguish and sorrow. "There was a furnace. What they did was put dead bodies in that furnace."

Haithcock was serving in 47th Infantry Regiment when U.S. Army troops liberated and then occupied Nazi concentration camps near the end of World War II.



Unfortunately, the diary he kept to chronicle his wartime experience is missing, but seared into his memory are certain events that haunt him to this day.

An African-American who had experienced discrimination when he attempted to join the U.S. Navy as a skilled machinist but was told by the recruiter that blacks were allowed to fill only menial roles on ships, he saw first hand at that gruesome concentration camp what can happen when prejudice, intolerance and hate are taken to shocking extremes.

Drafted in 1942, Haithcock received infantry combat training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where he became friends with Tyler and Bennett, two other African-American servicemen. After completing training, he says officials told them they could join the 92nd Infantry Division, an African-American unit that had fought in World War I. "We said no, we wanted to join the regular Army. We didn't want to be in a segregated outfit."

After additional training in welding and mechanics in Baltimore, Haithcock says the three sailed from New York to Scotland on the Queen Mary. Onboard, he got his first taste of war as the former luxury liner — now serving as a troop transport — maneuvered to evade German U-boats prowling the North Atlantic. "I was on the back deck and you could see the submarines coming up," he recalls. "They shot torpedoes but the ship was so fast it could turn quickly and avoid them. I thought, how in the world am I going to swim in this big ocean if we get hit?"

From Scotland the three soldiers traveled to a base near London where they repaired tanks and other equipment

See WORLD WAR II VETERAN, page 3

Serving their country

World War II veteran Ervin Haithcock and Louise, his wife of 68 years, who worked in a defense factory that manufactured ammunition for U.S. forces during World War II.

Photo provided by William Allen Baltz

Officer placed on two-week suspension

Being investigated for OWI

STURGIS — The Sturgis Police Department administration received information from one of its officers that the officer had been involved in a single car accident that occurred in the early hours of Oct. 26. The accident is being investigated by the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department which is the jurisdiction in which the accident occurred. The officer informed Administration that the officer was

being investigated for driving while intoxicated and that a blood test had been performed during hospital treatment for injuries.

An internal investigation has been conducted and the officer has been placed on a two-week suspension; mandatory counseling has been required; and a last chance agreement has been agreed to.

"The officer has been cooperative and forthright regarding this investigation both criminally and internally," according to Director of Public Safety Geoffrey Smith.

Top five river access sites named

Parkville at Portage River first choice

By Rick Cordes Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — The initiative to create a system of river trails in St. Joseph County took a paddle forward Monday evening with the announcement of five sites on which access development will focus.

Meeting simultaneously in Three Rivers and Sturgis, representatives of

Edgewater Resources presented the locations that have bubbled to the top as the best places for St. Joseph County to direct resources toward creating public access to its rivers and streams.

Topping the list is the junction of Parkville Road and the Portage River in Park Township, where a combination of an accessible launch site and auto parking possibilities make for an attractive river trail rendezvous location.

Second on the list is the junction of the St. Joseph River and M-66 just west of Mendon, with the St. Joseph River/

See RIVER ACCESS SITES, page 2

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WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON: Haigh named mayor pro tem

HAVE A GREAT DAY: Gwendolyn Dobrowski

TODAY'S WEATHER HIGH: 58° LOW: 30°

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Your Local Weather

Wed 11/12	Thu 11/13	Fri 11/14	Sat 11/15	Sun 11/16
54/32 A few showers in the morning, becoming a steady light rain in the afternoon.	34/28 Mix of sun and clouds. Highs in the mid 30s and lows in the upper 20s.	32/27 Snow showers possible. Highs in the low 30s and lows in the upper 20s.	33/26 Snow showers at times. Highs in the low 30s and lows in the mid 20s.	35/28 Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 30s and lows in the upper 20s.

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Yesterday's High: 57 Low: 40
Precipitation: 0

Yesterday's figures provided by Three Rivers Clean Water Plant



M-86 fix

Crews from Rieth Riley Construction advance on Centreville Monday afternoon in the eastbound lane after starting from the rail tracks in Three Rivers just beyond S. Main St. with milling and new asphalt application. Weather permitting, the work will continue into Centreville and then back along the westbound lanes, although rain and cold could forestall operations — possibly until next year's paving season.

Commercial-News/Rick Cordes

OBITUARIES

LILY ELAINA DRUMM

Lily Elaina Drumm, 7, of Three Rivers, passed away on Friday, Nov. 7, 2014 at the Bronson Methodist Hospital. Lily left this world too soon followed by unexpected complications involving her condition.

She was a joy to all who knew her, and was a constant example of love and happiness regardless of her trials. To hold her, was to hold Heaven and to know peace. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

She is survived by her loving family, mother, Rachael Drumm; grandparents, James (Rebecca) Drumm; siblings, Adrienne Drumm and Wyatt Zierle; aunt, Julie (Drumm) Burrell; uncles, Jonathan, Joshua, Jacob, and Jeremiah Drumm.

Family will receive friends from 11 a.m. until the time of services at noon on Wednesday, Nov. 12 at the Hohner Funeral Home, with Bishop Sean Peterson officiating.

Interment will be held in Riverside Cemetery, Three Rivers immediately following the services. Online condolences may be left at www.hohnerfh.com. Donations may be made to the family of Lily Drumm c/o Rachael Drumm. Envelopes available at the funeral home.

PHYLLIS MAY PETERS



Phyllis May Peters, 87, of Three Rivers, passed away on Friday, Nov. 7, 2014 at Three Rivers Health. Phyllis was born on Dec. 28, 1926 the daughter of Roland M. and Ester Louella (Mickem) Reed.

She attended special schools in Ann Arbor, Sturgis, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids due to her illness with polio at a young age. On April 4, 1947 she married a special man, Charles B. Peters in White Pigeon. In 1953 they moved to Constantine, where she owned and operated a seasonal plant business for 17 years. She served as a den mother, Sunday School teacher, and church treasurer.

For the past 30 years Phyllis had been a resident of Three Rivers. She worked as an executive secretary in Kalamazoo. She also worked for the Three Rivers Commercial, Sturgis Journal, and The Elkhart Truth newspapers. Her stories and poems have appeared in numerous national magazines and some of her photos have won awards.

Phyllis was a member of the Ninth Street Methodist Church. She also belonged to the Prime Timers at the Moorepark Community Church, a member of the National Association of Press Women, Michigan Association of Press Women, associate member of the Horizon's Grange, and the Michigan Post Polio Group.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, Charles in 1997, brothers, Richard and Robert Reed; sister, Rosemary Hagenbuch.

Phyllis leaves to cherish her loving memory son, Phyllip C. (Madaline) Peters of Elkhart, Ind.; daughter, Connie L. (Richard) Stoppenbach of Three Rivers; grandchildren, Tamara (Wesley) Runyon, Cory (Shannon) Stoppenbach, Jason (Aubrey) Evans, Benjamin and Andrew Peters; 12 great-grandchildren; brother, Eugene Reed of Sturgis; sisters, Anna Jane Smith of Schoolcraft and Juanita Reagan of Sturgis; many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

The family will receive friends from 11 a.m. until time of funeral services beginning at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 13, at Hohner Funeral Home with Pastor Jim Stillwell and Andrew Peters officiating.

Interment will be held at White Pigeon Cemetery.

Memorial may be directed to the Charity of One's Choice or Ninth Street Methodist Church. Envelopes available at Hohner Funeral Home in care of arrangements.

Online condolences may be left for the family at www.hohnerfh.com.

VIVIAN MARIE GEARHART



Vivian Marie Gearhart, 87, went to the loving arms of Jesus on Friday evening, Nov. 7, 2014. She was born to Edna and Elwin Kuder in Leonidas. She graduated from Colon High School Class of 1945. On Oct. 5, 1946, she married Earl J. Gearhart. They resided in Three Rivers until 2001. In 2001 they moved to South Lyon, Mich., to be closer to family due to Earl's declining health.

Vivian was a woman of faith and active in the Methodist Church. She was an avid sports fan. She also enjoyed crocheting and crafts. Vivian will be greatly missed by her family: daughter, Susan (Jon) Curtis; grandsons, Chris Curtis and Jon Andrew Curtis; great-grandchildren, Wyatt, Madeline, Graham and Sarah Curtis, along with nieces and nephews. Vivian was preceded in death by her husband Earl and one sister Marjorie Barnes. Per her wishes, anatomical donation to the University of Michigan has taken place, which will help in training future physicians.

Memorial services are scheduled at South Lyon First United Methodist Church, Thursday, Nov. 13, 11 a.m., Reverend Sondra Willobee officiating. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Vivian's name are suggested to Arbor Hospice, The American Cancer Society or First United Methodist Church Memorial Fund.



Thanks for your representation

Three Rivers business owner Diana DeGraaf chats with State Representative Matt Lori at a farewell open house Monday afternoon held at the office of the Three Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce.

Commercial-News/Elena Hines

OPEN HOUSE

Continued from page 1

succeeded by political newcomer Aaron Miller of Sturgis, said, "It's been a pleasure to serve. I'll still be around in the community."

Caswell is retiring, having opted to not run again for office, and his successor is John Proos. "Thanks for letting me work for you," Caswell said. "I've really

enjoyed it and you've been very kind to me."

Rick Cordes can be reached at 279-7488 ext. 23 or rick@threeriversnews.com.

WORLD WAR II VETERAN

Continued from page 1

damaged in the fighting after American troops landed in Europe.

On Dec. 16, 1944, Adolf Hitler launched a cunning plan to split American and British forces using crack German troops and tank divisions to blast through a weak point in allied lines in the densely forested Ardennes region of Belgium, France and Luxembourg. Known as the Battle of the Bulge, it was the deadliest battle of the war for Americans troops. More than 19,000 died in bitter fighting — from vicious hand-to-hand combat to ferocious tank duels — and thousands more were wounded.

To replenish U.S. forces, soldiers with infantry training like Haithcock and his two buddies were ordered to the front lines to continue the fight into Germany. Crossing the English Channel, they joined the 47th Infantry Regiment — nicknamed the "Raiders" — that had already experienced intense combat in Italy and epic battles in France as American troops slugged their way to Germany.

Haithcock, Tyler and Bennett were soon in a "fifth platoon" created exclusively for African-Americans in Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, and immediately thrust into combat. "I think they thought we [African-Americans] were chickens and we'd get them killed," he says.

Haithcock recounts that his platoon was often in the lead position, facing mortar fire and snipers. "The first, second, third, fourth and ours were supposed to rotate the lead. But we were often spearheading every other day." He answers bluntly when asked if he thought that was because commanders considered his platoon especially tenacious: "No, I think they wanted to get rid of us."

The Raiders fought their way to the Rhine River where, after a grueling battle, helped secure the strategically critical Bridge of Remagen — the only remaining bridge on the river that the retreating Wehrmacht had not destroyed — enabling U.S. armor including Haithcock's platoon to cross into the heart of Germany.

Combat was fierce and savage as the Germans stopped at nothing to thwart American troops pushing into their homeland. "I remember one time we were going through an area with hills on each side and they starting shooting at us. We jumped off our tanks and the first thing I knew I was killing little kids. They were Hitler Youth I guess. I said my gosh — but we had to kill them because they were trying to kill us."

Fighting the entire way, elements of the 47th eventually met soldiers of the Soviet Red Army advancing on Germany from the east. The fate of Hitler's Third Reich, along with its heinous crimes against

humanity, was sealed.

"The Russians gave us vodka," he recalls with a chuckle. "I wasn't used to drinking. Boy, it liked to kill me."

In the end, Haithcock says only 12 of the estimated 30 soldiers in his platoon survived the horrific fighting to help defeat Nazi tyranny. Along the way, he was promoted to sergeant and received various medals including the Combat Infantryman Badge and Bronze Star, the nation's fourth highest military award.

Fortunately, Tyler and Bennett also survived the ordeal. "We continued to get together for years afterwards," he says wistfully, "but they've passed on."

Despite the discrimination he experienced, Haithcock — a gracious man who also exudes the same resolve he displayed when fighting America's enemies 70 years ago — proudly shows the jacket bearing his sergeant stripes he wore as a member of the vaunted Raiders, one of the Army's most decorated regiments.

His diary along with the details of his service may be lost to history, but one thing is certain: Ervin Haithcock — and the other African-American soldiers he fought with in a makeshift platoon largely unknown to the nation they faithfully served — exemplifies the 47th Infantry Regiment's watchwords: "Never Quit."

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

RED CROSS



BLOOD DRIVES

Blood donors must be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds and be in good general health. For information on a blood drive in any of the 65 counties served by the Great Lakes Region, call 1-800-GIVE LIFE or visit www.givelife.org. Thank you for your continued support of the American Red Cross.

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November 11
Kushner & Company
2427 W. Centre Avenue • 11:00am - 3:45pm
November 14
The Crossroads Mall
6650 South Wedstnedge Ave. • 1:00pm - 5:45pm

THREE RIVERS

November 6
Three Rivers Health
701 S. Health Parkway • 1:30pm - 7:15pm
November 12
UAW Local 2093
15802 Hoffman Rd. • 12:00pm - 6:00pm

COLON

November 19
Colon Township Fire Hall
1063 W M-86 • 12:00pm - 5:45pm

VICKSBURG

November 21
St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church

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PARKS DIRECTOR

Continued from page 1

prepared to move forward with the mission of the St. Joseph County parks program.

A graduate of Western Michigan University with an M.A. in natural resources management and environmental analysis, MacDonald was selected from three candidates to succeed county parks director John Pence.

Rick Cordes can be reached at 279-7488 ext. 23 or rick@threeriversnews.com.

