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Different spokes for different folks

More people find niche in biking world as campus bike use increases; riders take pride in sport



SEAN COOK/THE STATE NEWS

Lansing resident Trek Vandecar jumps a roughly 20-foot gap over what once was a flowing creek, but now is largely just stagnant water, on hand-built jumps east of Hagadorn Road. Vandecar, who is part of a growing sport known as freeriding that combines elements of mountain bike racing with BMX jumping, often practices on Boyne Mountain in Boyne Falls, Mich., and hopes to freeride professionally.

CRIME

BRAKE TRIAL PROGRESSES, DEFENSE MIGHT BEGIN THIS WEEK

By Brittany Shammass
THE STATE NEWS

Grand Haven — Prosecutors plan to continue to stack evidence against Troy Brake, who is charged with killing MSU student Katherine A. Brown and three others, at his trial, which is scheduled to continue Wednesday.



Brake's attorney Paul McDonough plans to start his defense of Brake this week if the trial continues to proceed more quickly than expected.

Brake is on trial in Ottawa County's 20th Circuit Court. He was charged with four counts of open murder and three felony firearm charges in connection with the slayings of Brown, 18; her boyfriend Jeremy Zimmer, 20; his mother Sharmaine Zimmer, 53; and his brother Tyler Zimmer, 17. All were found dead in the Zimmer home Sept. 20, 2008.

Jarros watched with mostly blank faces last week as witnesses detailed the condition of the Zimmer home after it was ravaged by a fire prosecutors say was set to cover up the murders. Witnesses' recollections later came to life for Jarros, who on Thursday were given a video tour of the charred home where the Zimmer family once lived.

All faces turned to the screen in what would have been complete silence, except for the faint moans coming from someone in the courtroom. The home's white siding was peeled back, revealing blackened walls and an interior supported with wood beams.

Medical examiners later described the bodies of the four victims found inside the house, who died from gunshot wounds or blunt trauma to the head.

Then came the evidence connecting Brake to the killings. Firearms experts testified that the shells found in the Zimmer home were fired from a Glock handgun seized from Brake's home. Tarah VanDyke, Brake's

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"You can personalize your bike like you can personalize your car, but it's just so much easier to do with your bike."

By Daniel Luscombe
THE STATE NEWS

Bicycles of all shapes and sizes can be seen rolling down the streets of East Lansing, and the riders of the bikes are just as diverse as the two-wheeled, pedal-powered machines that propel them. The MSU Department of Police and Public Safety reported in fall 2008 a 273 percent increase in campus bike registration since 2003, indicating more people are getting geared up to ride bikes.

"To each person, it's really a different sort of thing," said Hunter Seyfarth, owner of Evergreen Cycles and Repair, 314 Evergreen Ave. "For some people, riding is transportation, some people that just want to go out and cruise around the neighborhoods." Seyfarth opened his shop about two and a half years ago and the wide variety of bikes awaiting repair reflect his different clientele.

A vintage women's cruiser with a bad brake cable sat on his workstation last week across from an upscale mountain bike getting tuned up in time for a customer's upcoming race. Seyfarth said freshmen make up a large portion of bike users because they can't have cars on campus. "They all ride; they don't really have a choice I guess," he said.

Destined to ride

Trek Vandecar said there is little coincidence that he shares a name with a bicycle manufacturer. "I was named after the definition of the word, but being

that my dad worked here and my grandpa owns it, it's like I'm living up to the name," Vandecar said. "I had no choice but to ride mountain bikes."

Vandecar is the third generation to work at his grandfather's store, Dennis's Central Park Bicycles, 1805 Central Park Drive, in Okemos. Vandecar competes in the sport of downhill mountain bike racing, a timed trial that begins at the top of a mountain and ends at its base. The course includes anything from two- or three-foot natural terrain drops and a couple

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For a video of people talking about their biking experiences visit stateneews.com/multimedia.

EAST LANSING

Forfeiture fund sustains drug prevention

By Kate Jacobson
THE STATE NEWS

East Lansing's newest drug-detection dog was purchased using drug money last year.

As part of the city's Drug Forfeiture Fund, which consists of money and property seized during drug-related crimes, money is accumulated and then spent on drug prevention, equipment and education for the East Lansing Police Department. It has been incorporated into the city's budget for the past three fiscal years. Before that, the money was set aside but not recorded in the overall budget.

In the city's 2009-10 budget, which was approved last week, department officials estimate they will need about \$7,000 from drug forfeitures in order to maintain the department's drug prevention programs. Setting aside the seized money has been practiced since the 1990s.

East Lansing Drug Forfeiture Fund

In 2007, the East Lansing Police Department seized \$1,126 from drug forfeitures.

In 2008, ELPD seized \$11,250 in drug forfeitures.

ELPD estimates they will spend about \$7,000 from the forfeiture fund for the fiscal year 2009-10.

The fund was previously separate from the city's budget, operating solely as a fund within the police department in which revenue was put in or taken out as money was made or needed. In 2007-08, the fund started at \$43,013, and for 2009-10, it starts at \$16,671.

In the city's 2007-08 budget, city finance officials incorporated the Drug Forfeiture Fund for the first time.

"It makes it more transparent," said Mike Birchmeier, budget and accounting administrator for East Lansing. "You can see exactly how money is coming and going out and what it's being used for."

Last fiscal year, drug forfeitures brought in \$11,250 to the police department.

"It's helped the city out by making it possible to buy the police equipment they need," Birchmeier said.

In fiscal year 2007-08, the city received \$1,126, Birchmeier said. Because of the range of forfeiture revenue, it's difficult to know how much the city will receive and spend each year, he said.

"You can't plan ahead for this sort of thing," he said. "We don't budget anything until the next fiscal year for the year previous."

The city used to report its numbers directly to the state, which monitors drug forfeiture

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NATION

New law aims to protect students from creditors

By Meredith Skrzypczak
THE STATE NEWS

Students will have further protections from credit card company practices because of a bill signed into law by President Barack Obama on Friday.

Those practices include aggressive solicitation, unclear terms of agreement, interest rate hikes and added fees.

The Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility and Disclosure (CARD) Act will place student safeguards against practices federal and state officials call "misleading," while also making it harder for students to obtain credit cards.

"Now you need a law degree to understand (credit card agreements)," said Justice Sessions, a U.S. Senate banking committee aide. "They're full of little tricks and traps that get a lot of consumers in big

trouble, particularly young consumers — at the same time, they are aggressively marketing cards to students."

Students no longer would be randomly solicited to apply for credit cards and would have a choice to "opt in" for credit card offers, Sessions said.

"Most students will absolutely not be affected," said Joyce Banish, vice president of university and community relations at MSU Federal Credit Union. "The only thing is that this may require that the student would not be able to have a card without a cosigner."

As part of the new law, credit card applicants under the age of 21 must provide a cosigner or proof of income.

"It would be requiring us to have a student prove that they have \$500 a month in income to qualify for a credit card, which is difficult because of the lack of permanent jobs that students have," Banish said. Students also would need

cosigner approval on all limit increases, although the law might make it harder for young people to receive credit, some students can see the benefits.

"I think it is a very good thing to protect (students') rights if the credit card companies are misdirecting them," said Ryan Keller, a computer science and Japanese senior. "It's just unfair. It's like cigarette companies advertising to kids."

A report released earlier this year by Sallie Mae, a student loan provider, showed that 84 percent of undergraduates have at least one credit card, but the average student has more than four. The report also showed that almost one in five college seniors hold \$7,000 or more in credit card debt.

State officials see the new law as a tool in helping students decrease their debt.

"Right now, college students

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