

Senior citizens come to E.L. for prom, police help out

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Festival looks to revamp Lansing through activity

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Professor uses cartoons to teach biology class

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UNIVERSITY

MSU trustees take time off to think over budget, tuition

By Kayla Habermehl
THE STATE NEWS

The MSU Board of Trustees is taking the university's concerns on the road to Holland, Mich., for its annual summer retreat.

The retreat, which begins today, lasts until Wednesday. The board, along with President Lou Anna K. Simon, will discuss the budget and tour a Pfizer facility given to MSU in 2007.

The board also will evaluate Simon's performance during the last year.

MSU Trustee Melanie Foster said the board will focus on the decline in state appropriations as well as a review of Boldness by Design.

"Certainly one big issue is the budget and the continuing drastic decline in state revenue and how that's going to affect public higher education," Foster said. "We're also going to do a review of the president, which is typical. ... We'll have an update on the five guiding principals of Boldness by Design since the last retreat and tour the Pfizer facility that was gifted to MSU that's in Holland."

The key areas of Boldness by Design include continuing to improve academic programs, outreach and research and increasing stewardship, according to the Boldness by Design Web site.

Trustee George Perles said the board will discuss the entire budget but also look for ways to keep tuition down.

Simon said the retreat is a forum for discussion, not for decision-making.

"It's making sure everyone is on the same page," she said. "We've already made preliminary budget decisions for fiscal year (2010) and fiscal year (2011) so this isn't a decision making meeting — it's the

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2 local murders remain unsolved

By Brittany Shammass
THE STATE NEWS

A tree grows outside the home where Brandon D'Annunzio once lived, marking almost nine years that have passed since he was killed in a 2000 East Lansing homicide.

For his mother, Shawn D'Annunzio, the tree, now more than six feet tall after almost nine years, is a grave site — a place to pray and something she can see grow now that she cannot watch her son age.

"When I go there and see how tall it is and how it's grown, I see it like it's his growth and he's still there and he's growing," she said.

But while the tree devel-

ops with each passing day, the search for his killer remains stagnant, with no new answers of who punched Brandon D'Annunzio Oct. 1, 2000, outside what was BW-3, 220 M.A.C. Ave., leaving him with a head injury that ended his life 10 days later.

Brandon D'Annunzio's case is one of two homicides within the last 20 years in the East Lansing and MSU community that remains unsolved.

A black book on a shelf

In 20 years, eight incidents of homicide have been reported to police in the East Lansing and MSU area. Of the eight, investigation into two cases — the beating of Brandon D'Annunzio and the 1993 strangling of East Lansing resident Mary Jean D'Agostino —

"I want to tell them they didn't just kill my son, they destroyed my family in the process."

Shawn D'Annunzio, mother of homicide victim

has never closed.

D'Agostino's body was found Aug. 29, 1993, in the hallway of a 787 Burcham Drive apartment building. Autopsy reports indicated she was strangled, but East Lansing police investigation hit dead ends and no suspect was found.

In recent years, a sergeant spent a year working on the case, scanning every piece of evidence for DNA, said East Lansing police Sgt. Mike Phillips, supervisor of the department's records bureau. The case still remains unsolved.

After Brandon D'Annunzio was beaten, witnesses helped police create composite sketches of the three people who confronted him, one of whom delivered the fatal blow. The three have never been found.

For several years, investigators worked hard on the case, Phillips said. Investigators posed filters seeking information about the three people who fled the scene and followed up on the tips they received, he said.

But the work of investigators was to no avail. The case will be difficult to solve unless a person

with more information comes forward, Phillips said.

"Basically, his case is in a black book on a shelf," Shawn D'Annunzio said. "That's what my son has become — a black book on a shelf."

Dead end

Homicide cases become cold cases because investigators run out of leads to follow, said Barry Glover, a cold case expert and associate professor of criminal justice at Saint Leo University in Saint Leo, Fla. When investigators are unable to find the people they need to speak with and the case reaches a dead end, it is put on a shelf when new cases come in, he said.

"The sad reality is other cases come along and people are

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Simon



GETTING INTO Motion

MSU alumnus Dustin Burden drops back in from a tall stall on a mini-ramp half-pipe in the backyard of his friends' house off Michigan Avenue in East Lansing on Tuesday. Burden, who has been skating for about 14 years, helped his friends Dustin Brockett, an economics senior, and Mike Howard, a biochemistry and molecular biology senior, build the ramp in a matter of 24 hours. SEAN COOK | THE STATE NEWS

To watch a video about the half-pipe, visit stateneews.com/multimedia.

MICHIGAN

Democrats propose 35% rise in wages

By Meredith Skrzypczak
THE STATE NEWS

In-state employees might see bigger paychecks if a proposal to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour makes its way onto the November 2010 ballot.

The Michigan Democratic Party introduced the ballot proposal last week as part of a plan to help Michigan workers in a tough economy.

"We feel that Michigan workers need our help right now," said John Tramontana, spokesman for the Michigan Democratic Party.

"We will do everything we can to help (them)."



Granholm

If the proposal moves forward, hundreds of thousands of signatures on a petition would be needed to get the proposal on the November 2010 ballot for a state vote, Tramontana said.

Opponents of the proposal say a wage increase would hurt businesses and employees in the state.

"(Employers) don't have a tree that grows money," said Wendy Block, director of health policy and human resources for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce.

"Most job providers would have no choice but to eliminate jobs."

A minimum wage increase might not mean workers will lose their jobs, but patrons might see effects on prices, Mark Westens, general manager at Menna's Joint, 4790 S. Hagadorn Road, said

"The profits would probably go down, so to compensate, prices would go up again," he said.

Some local business owners are worried about the proposal and what it might mean for business overall.

"There's an awful lot of stuff (Michigan Democratic Party Chairman Mark Brewer) wants to change," said Joe Bell, owner of The Peanut Barrel Restaurant, 521 E. Grand River Ave. "It's a little scary."

Bell fears the Michigan Democratic Party might have moved too quickly.

"They're all thoughtful proposals that really look out for the little guy, but I think (Brewer) needs to do a little more research," he said.

An increase might benefit the economy, said Jack Finn,

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LEGISLATION

New bill could help expand hate crime laws

By Meredith Skrzypczak
THE STATE NEWS

Gay, transgender or disabled people might have more protection under a new U.S. Senate bill that expands the reach of hate crime legislation.



Levin

The bill was attached as an amendment to a defense spending bill July 16 and now gives the U.S. Department of Justice jurisdiction over hate crimes based on a person's gender, sexual orientation or disability.

There already are federal laws in place prohib-

iting violent crimes based on race, color, national origin and religion.

"There are not many subjects that are more important than the subject of hate crimes," U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., said in a floor statement. "This bill embodies values of diversity and freedom that our men and women in uniform fight to defend."

Michigan legislation to protect people from hate crimes based on sexual orientation has not passed in the state Senate, said Michael Crow, assistant professor at James Madison College and expert on gay and lesbian politics.

"Action at the federal level might make it easier ... to make a case expanding Michigan hate crime laws to include sexual orientation," he said. Some students said the bill is a triumph and an advance-

ment, which would have been inconceivable 20 years ago.

"It's just another roadblock for people that want to use hate instead of using their other emotions toward people they might not agree with," said Kate Miller, president of the West Circle and off-campus LBGT group, People Respecting Individuality Diversity and Equality, or PRIDE.

Groups in opposition to the bill worry that it would inhibit free speech.

"(If a pastor) talks out against homosexuality just from a moral standpoint and then someone goes out and kills a homosexual, that pastor is liable," said Michele Combs, spokeswoman for the Christian Coalition of America. "We don't think that aspect of the bill is right."

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