

New board member

The Board of Education has filled the vacancy left by the death of Maureen Cundiff.

Change at City Hall

After nearly 30 years of public service, Sandy Purper will no longer grace City Hall.

Presidential visitor

Kaitlin Blakemore will get the chance of a lifetime to attend a presidential inauguration.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What do the Browns need to focus on during the off season?

E-mail us at: info@westlifeneews.com by Friday, January 14.

West LIFE

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Inside

Long time coming

North Olmsted defeated Olmsted Falls in boys basketball for the first time in decade.

Page 19

New school record

Lutheran West senior Kurt Schnittger lived up to his coach's expectations and set the school record for career wins.

Page 21

Obituaries

- Harry A. Bartholic Jr.
Anna Lou Bishop
Marie Case
Gerhardt Hermann
John Philip Hoffman III
Paul R. Manning Sr.
Oscar J. Nilson
John J. Richards
James W. Sanders

Page 16

Index

- Editorial Page 8
Man on the Street Page 9
Cops Page 17



Flooding

There was little chance for anyone, except perhaps a duck, to use the Metroparks after the Rocky River rose following the recent rains and snow melt. (Photo by Larry Bennet)

Survival story

Son of former Bay Superintendent survives Indian Ocean tsunami

By Eric J. Eakin

A report that Thailand had been devastated by a tidal wave was a blow to former Bay Village Superintendent of Schools Denny Woods and wife Janis.

They knew their son, Jeff, was vacationing at a resort in Thailand with his girlfriend, Kristin Foord.

There were almost 12 hours of pacing and worry before they finally heard their son was safe. He called on a borrowed cellular phone from a Buddhist temple where the two had taken refuge after nearly losing their lives.

In a series of hastily typed e-mails to their parents, Jeff, 29, and Kristin, 30, detailed the events of a day they will never forget. These e-mails have been edited for punctuation and capitalization only:

"We were on the beach/pool when it hit and lost everything, almost died. The wall of water came at us and we ran and I hung onto a tree. But Jeff got swept away, but he found a log to hold onto and was eventually able to swim to shore in between waves. Then more waves kept coming for a half-hour at least, from both directions (our hotel was on a spit of land between two sides of the ocean). I didn't find him until it calmed down a little, maybe 15 minutes later, but it was just a short break and

the waves came back. We were then in a tree we climbed and we saw people being swept away, trucks were floating by, people, mostly little kids, we thought we were going to die and we didn't know if even bigger waves were coming. We had no info.

"Finally a local person helped us find a little hill and we were there with 100 people from the hotel. Eight people died that we know of from our hotel and many more are missing. We stayed on the hill for several hours while more and more waves came, but at longer intervals. We were counting time between waves like contractions. And then when the counting seemed safe based on the pattern, waves were 10 minutes apart or more, we made a run down the beach to a higher place in town, about a half mile away not knowing if another wave was coming. But we had to run on the beach to get to safety because we were out on the very end of a peninsula away from the mainland.

"We stayed on a hill in town until night and then they organized a temple for us to sleep on the floor. All the time the rumors were coming that an even bigger wave would come and we didn't know if the temple was high

See TSUNAMI p. 2

Court says Springvale records are confidential

By Jeff Gallatin

NORTH OL MSTED

City officials and Mayor Norman T. Musial still disagree over the documents sought by the mayor on the Springvale ethics investigation even though a court ruling has been made on the matter saying the records are confidential law enforcement records.

After the 8th District Court of Appeals released its ruling on the case Friday, Law Director Jim Dubelko called the ruling "a victory for the city" while Musial said the decision was "split right down the middle."

Musial filed the legal writ in February 2004 against the city and several administrative officials, seeking an order from the court which would require the city to release to him in his position as mayor and as a private citizen all of the records of the 2002 North Olmsted City Police investigation. The investigation looked into allegations that Musial and his then administrative assistant Mary Creadon had used their positions with the city to obtain favorable pricing for events at the Springvale Ballroom, which is operated by the city. After a several-month investigation, the Grand Jury returned a no bill, meaning it voted not to file any criminal charges against Musial or Creadon.

Later, the North Olmsted Municipal Ethics Commission later voted that no probable cause existed to charge Musial with any ethics violations in the matter. It did vote that cause existed to

See SPRINGVALE p. 2

Harbarger resigns as law director

By Kevin Kelley

WESTLAKE

Mayor Dennis Clough expects to appoint an acting law director to serve through the remainder of 2005, following the resignation last week of David Harbarger. His resignation is effective March 1.

"I will probably be appointing someone acting until we find out what happens after the election in November," Clough said last week.

In November, Westlake resident passed two charter amendments making the law director an elected post. The mayor and most council members had campaigned against the change. Harbarger, who lives in Lakewood and served as that city's mayor, from 1991 to 1995 said after the election that even if he lived in Westlake he would not run for law director because he is philosophically opposed to electing a law director.

Backers of the successful charter amendments focused on Harbarger's recommendation of fellow Roetzel and Andress partner George Rooney to handle a complicated lawsuit brought against the city by local businessman Charles Shimola. From 1999 through July 2004, Westlake paid \$830,775 in legal fees and expenses to Roetzel and Andress in connection with the Shimola case.

Noting that council unanimously approved the hiring of Rooney, Harbarger and Clough said the recommendation of a law partner was completely ethical. They also noted Rooney granted the city a considerable discount on his fees.

In 1998, a common pleas jury found in favor of Shimola and awarded him \$2.5 million. But the judge threw out the award amount, calling it excessive. Shimola appealed that action, and in September 2000, the 8th District Court of Appeals sent the case back to common pleas court to deter

See HARBARGER p. 2

