

WestLife

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Two die in Hilliard Blvd. fire *Space heater suspected as cause of blaze*

By Kevin Kelley

WESTLAKE

Investigators believe a space heater likely caused a fire that killed two people in a Hilliard Boulevard home early Sunday morning.

Mark Sullivan, 57, and Debra Porter, 49, died from smoke inhalation, Westlake Fire Chief Richard Pietrick said.

A group of teens driving past the house near the Hilliard - Canterbury intersection around 1:30 Sunday morning saw flames shooting out of the house. They stopped, called 9-1-1 and broke a bedroom window in an attempt to rescue any individuals inside.

Pietrick told West Life the first call about the fire was received at 1:35 a.m. and the first fire engine arrived four minutes later.

Firefighters found the residence partially

engulfed in flames and the remainder of the house filled with smoke. When they entered the house, the two residents were already dead.

Witnesses said flames were shooting out the windows as high as 12 feet.

Pietrick said there was evidence that candles were in the house, but investigators are leaning toward the space heater as the cause.

Fire units from Rocky River, Bay Village and North Olmsted assisted fighting the blaze, which was finally extinguished at around 2:30 a.m.

Pietrick said a non-working smoke detector was found just feet from where the woman's body was found. He said the tragedy underscores the importance of having operating smoke detectors in residences.

The last fatal fire in Westlake occurred in March 2006. A Hedgewood Avenue woman, 70-year-old Beverly Ulmer, died following an explosion and fire at her residence.



Two residents died in a fire that struck this Hilliard Boulevard home early Sunday morning. (Photo by Larry Bennet)



Teachers take pay freeze

By Jeff Gallatin

NORTH OLMSTED

School officials hope a wage freeze and the district's teachers union agreeing to pay a portion of their health care premiums can help lead to a new operating levy passing and several million in budget cuts being avoided.

District and union officials announced at the school board's organizational meeting last Thursday the new one year agreement which contains a one-year freeze on wages and the North Olmsted Education Association members paying 5 percent of their health care premiums. Previously, the district picked up the

all the health care costs. In addition Superintendent Kurt Stanic showed more than \$4.2 million in specific financial figures for what would be cut if the Feb. 6 special election on the proposed \$6.5 million levy fails.

Stanic said the agreement shows the union is aware of the need for keeping a tight rein on district finances.

"The teachers recognize the serious financial condition of the district and want to make sure the instructional programs remain solid and stable," Stanic said.

He said the agreement will bring

See **TEACHERS**, p. 21



Left, North Olmsted School Board members John Lasko and Joanne DiCarlo observe while right, Superintendent Kurt Stanic listens to Annabel Brigleb of the North Olmsted Education Association. (Photos by Larry Bennet).



Celebrating at The Q



The North Olmsted High School hockey team celebrates following a 4-3 victory over Lake Catholic High School Sunday afternoon at Quicken Loans Arena. See story on page B1.

Residents want recreation land

By Kevin Kelley

WESTLAKE

City Hall and the Westlake City Schools have been haggling for several months over 42 acres of undeveloped land the district owns on Bradley Road. Now a group of citizens is hoping to weigh in on the property's fate through a petition drive.

Bill Hornung, an active volunteer in the community's sports and recreation leagues for several years, submitted a petition with 157 signatures to City Council Thursday.

He promised several hundred more signatures would be coming.

"We, the undersigned, voters of Westlake, Ohio, would like that the 42 acres on Bradley Road to be utilized for recreational purposes," the petition states.

Hornung wants City Council to begin a process by which Westlake voters can zone the Bradley Road property

See **PETITIONS**, p. 21