

WEST LIFE

February 25, 2009 - Vol. 69, No. 15

The Award-Winning Westshore Weekly 75¢



Westlake sophomore Kalpana Beach takes her turn cutting down the net after the Demons defeated Amherst, 55-38, to win the Southwestern Conference girls basketball championship last Wednesday. (West Life photo by Larry Bennet)

Rockport says bye-bye Best Buy

By Allison Pritchard

ROCKY RIVER

After previously signing a letter of intent, it now looks like Best Buy won't be the saving grace to fill the large vacancy at Rocky River's Rockport's shopping plaza after all.

Because of the economy and layoffs at the corporate office, Best Buy is reconsidering the Rockport location, Kory Koran, director of economic and community development, said.

One of the reasons the company is backing out is that since Circuit City closed, all of those prime locations are now available, and Best Buy may eye those in the future. As of now though, Best Buy doesn't plan to look at any former Circuit City spots (which have prime move-in conditions) or new locations until the economy improves, he

said.

Although Rockport suffers, the rest of Rocky River is doing relatively well, with low unemployment and rising property values, Koran said at the Feb. 16 council meeting during his economic and community development director's report.

"The only significant vacancies we have are in Rockport," Koran said. However, "We can't fool ourselves. We are in the midst of a very serious economic recession and there are going to be stores closing...We are not immune from the global economic woes."

As of now, there are no other stores interested in the location, Koran said. Rockport will be sitting for a while, he added. "Everyone is cutting back," he said. "I'd be totally surprised if anything happens [to fill the vacant Rockport location] between 18 months to two years," he said.

Credit crunch delays Center Ridge apartment project

By Kevin Kelley

WESTLAKE

A proposed 240-unit apartment complex set to be built on Center Ridge Road just west of Westlake Porter Public Library is on hold due to the nation's financial crisis.

But Jim Crossin, vice president of development for Indianapolis-based developer Flaherty & Collins, told West Life that his company is still very interested in the project.

"Because of the credit crunch, we have not yet lined up financing for the project," Crossin said. "We are still very interested in developing the site like we planned with luxury apartments."

Flaherty & Collins had an option to purchase the 30-acre property from Sears Holdings Corporation, but that

option has expired, Crossin said. Several weeks ago, a sign was posted along Center Ridge Road advertising the land for sale.

Crossin said his company would consider working in a joint venture with any party that may purchase the land.

Flaherty & Collins's plans call for 12 apartment buildings, each with 20 units. Half would be one-bedroom units and half would be two-bedroom units with a loft. Units will range in size

from 800 to 1,350 square feet. The development plans, submitted in December 2007 and approved by the city's planning commission in April 2008, also set aside about eight acres for future development.

Bob Parry, Westlake's director of economic development, said the city's approval expires after one year, although the developer could obtain an extension.

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Students get firehouse feast for helping out

By Jeff Gallatin

NORTH OLMSTED

A group of North Olmsted High School students fired up about raising funds for a good cause got to feed that fire at a North Olmsted Fire Station Friday as a reward.

After students in Amanda Jamieson's junior English class raised more than \$2,000 on the Dec. 19 Day of Giving they got to pick their prize. The group selected having a breakfast and tour at Fire Station 1, which holds the city fire department's largest shift and headquarters. The funds were given to the Muscular Dystrophy Association, which the city firefighters also support with an annual car show and other activities.

"They were pretty excited by it," said Jamieson. "They liked that they were helping out others with it. It also helped that they knew they were going to get a great breakfast out of it as well as get out of school for a little while."



North Olmsted Firefighter Carl Schanz tells a group of touring North Olmsted High School students how using fitness equipment benefits the department. (West Life photo by Larry Bennet)

After the students and staff arrived, the firefighters served up heaping portions of eggs, sausage and pancakes with orange juice. Several firefighters also talked with the school group about what they do.

Jackie Simcic-Becker, health care services coordinator for the Northeast Ohio MDA office, said events like this help the organization by raising funds and awareness.

"They certainly did a lot to help out," she said. "We appreciate that they want to get involved like that. It's nice that they're already getting involved at their age."

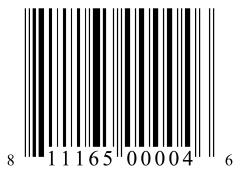
Simcic-Becker, who lives in North Olmsted and has children attending school in the district, said she enjoyed the breakfast and seeing the station as well.

"They also are a big help to us throughout the year," she said. "The car show is one of our most successful events and they help out at camps and other events throughout the year."

After the morning feast was finished, the firefighters took the group on the tour. They started by showing off the vehicles in the squad bay, a fire engine and EMS ambulance squad. While there, junior Michael Woodworth, got an up close view of the squad that he's like to duplicate in the future.

"I'd like to be a firefighter one day," he said. "They do a lot of good things

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