

Streetmail, Michigan Edition

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The weather outside is frightful, but we're turning up the heat in Streetmail. Read on, because things are getting steamy. This week, we're...

Baring it all for a good cause in STREET.TALK... learning about each other in STREET.WISE... and sharing our opinions in STREET.SMART

STREET.TALK

SAY CHEESE(CAKE): Gone is the time we relied on the neighborhood drug store's ad-laden calendar to keep our days straight. Today goofy Weimarers, French Impressionist art, museum-quality photography and comic strip heroes adorn our walls and record our appointments. For some folks, taste runs to scantily-clad females -- like the Calendar Girls of Milford. This 2001 calendar features representatives of the southeast Michigan village's garden club and historical society, all in their 40s through 70s. Each wears only a smile (plus a few strategically-placed leaves, skateboards or baked goods).

The women hope "Milford Beauties Out and About" will help raise nearly \$600,000 for community renovation projects. They got the idea from a steamier British calendar, which fetched half a million dollars for cancer research. "We're this conservative little community and people just thought this was hilarious," Jan Neibauer, one of the calendar's models, told The Detroit News. "We did it as a spoof. And we figured if nothing else, our husbands would buy them to keep anyone else from seeing them." So far, the calendar is so popular they're planning a 2002 edition.

** How about you? Would you follow the Milford Beauties' example and take the shirt off your back for a good cause? Join our reader poll at <survey:link> .

m a i l . b a g

SPARE THE CHILD: Last week Vicky asked if abusive parents aren't given too many chances, citing an example where one couple's children were taken away and returned five times before the kids were permanently removed from the home. There's a "three strikes" rule for felons, Vicky reasons -- shouldn't there be something similar when it comes to child abuse? Most of you think so, including CHARLOTTE EDIE of Kimball, who writes, "Three strikes is still way too high. Once a child abuser always a child abuser. Would you like to be sent back to someone who has beaten or sexually abused you?"

BEVERLY TEETER of Farwell agrees something needs to happen. She writes, "As a retired RN, I have seen the effects of child abuse. I definitely agree that there should be a limit to the number of times an abused child should be returned to their abuser, parent or not." PEG DONOFRIO of Monroe says, "I do not think a parent should be given two chances; if they mess up one time it should be all over. Permanent removal. We are talking about the life of a child!"

"Child abuse is a crime and needs to be treated as such. Why should parents or anyone be given the opportunity to commit this crime over and over again?" asks JENNIE BROWN of Dearborn. CHARLES MITCHELL of Lansing advocates counseling, "not [with] some 20 year old who is still wet behind the ears, but an older person who can read between the lines and understands how an abusive parent thinks. This type of parent will say and do anything to get their family back to abuse them again."

JAYNE DECONINCK of Algonac doesn't believe a set number of offenses is the answer. She writes, "One more law in this land is not the solution to another serious problem in our world. I too have witnessed the good and bad of our legal system. There are as many parents accused by their ex's crowding our judicial system with false accusations." Even some of the "no" votes sound like "yes." KAY STEWART of Monroe voted no, then wrote, "Three strikes should not be given

serious consideration. Everyone can make one mistake. If they don't learn from the first and are given a second chance and then they fail again, they really don't deserve a third."

Finally, LEE HUNSBERGER of Ionia is unsure, and asks, "If you take Timmy and Mary away from their parents, where do they go? What do you think about requiring birth control for inadequate parents so not so many Timmys and Marys are born?" For their complete comments, plus many more, go to <MI survey overflow URL> .

ALSO IN THIS WEEK'S MAIL: We're still getting letters on the Michigander vs. Michiganian and Real vs. Artificial debates. To read them, go to <MI Street.Talk overflow link> .

** Remember: STREET.TALK is a two-way street, so tell us what you think. Send your comments to <streettalk e-mail>. Include your full name and hometown if you'd like to be included in the newsletter.

STREET.WISE

DO YA KNOW WHERE I'M COMING FROM? Michigan Streetmail reader PHYLLIS SLATER is asking for your help. She's chairman of a breakfast held in conjunction with the seventh annual West Bloomfield "United We Walk," set for Jan. 15 at the West Bloomfield High School. "West Bloomfield residents include Jewish, Arab and Asian backgrounds," Phyllis explains. "We're working to understand each other better, and our theme for this year is finding the things we have in common, rather than the other way around." The walk follows the breakfast, and this year the committee has added a lunch to encourage communication between the generations. "Other school districts are joining us [in our] desire to understand and communicate better [with] all ethnic backgrounds," she says. The evening before, the Clergy Association of West Bloomfield will hold a candlelight vigil.

What can you do? A couple of things. First, Phyllis needs donations of bagels, baked goods, and tableware and paper products for the breakfast -- no money, please. (Last year's event drew over 2,000 people and they're expecting more this year.) She can provide an acknowledgment letter for tax purposes. Second, contact your local school district and see if something similar is planned for your neck of the woods. And third, start planning for next year. "Knowing who can assist next year is very important," Phyllis says. The committee is also interested in knowing what other areas are doing for United We Walk. "It takes a year to plan our event, so hearing from others now is important." You can reach Phyllis at <slater@tir.com> .

** Who's making a difference in your town? Send us an e-mail at <Michigan Streetwise e-mail> and we'll pass the word.

STREET.SMART

GOOD FOR YOU! Last week Vicky asked for the name behind a Battle Creek icon. In 1952, Thurl Ravenscroft began providing the voice for his most recognizable character, Tony the Tiger. He has put words in the mouths of numerous Disney characters, including that gruff-but-lovable vacuum cleaner Kirby in "The Brave Little Toaster." ELIZABETH JOHNSON of Lansing knows her cereal trivia, and she's this week's winner. Watch for your prize in six to eight weeks, Elizabeth. Now for this week's question:

MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY: My all-time favorite T-shirt often helped my kids remember a simple truth: "If mamma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." My husband cracks up over another shirt spoofing a popular expression. It pictures Lucy Ricardo and her sidekick Ethel Mertz decked out in alien garb, and claims, "WOMEN are from Mars." Another favorite: "I'm talking and I can't shut up." Around East Lansing, we see a lot of condescending remarks about Ann Arbor. T-shirts are popular and cover a gamut of topics, so tell me:

** What is your favorite T-shirt saying? Send your answer, plus your full name and mailing address (required), to <streetmart@michigan.streetmail.com> . Our winner -- whose name will be drawn at random from all entries received by 8 p.m. Tuesday -- will receive a cool prize from the Streetmail grab bag of goodies.