

POLI-TICKER

Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano to seek re-election

DETROIT — Embattled Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano announced Friday that he plans to seek re-election.

First elected as county exec in 2002, Ficano is seeking his fourth term after serving 20 years as the Wayne County sheriff.

Ficano is set to hold a press conference at 5 p.m. tomorrow to outline his plans for the future.

TAYLOR — Resident Jeff Jones has announced his run for the U.S. Senate.

A political independent, Jones' platform includes accountability in Washington, economic reform and individual expression in education.

On his website, JeffJonesforSenate.com, his motto is "No strings attached, speaking about truth gone viral."

"This is not a personal ambition, simply an answer to those that lost sight of the term public servant," Jones said in a release. "God gave me two ears and one mouth for a reason."

A recently retired financial services industry worker, Jones serves at Taylor Security Baptist Church, where he has spent seven of the last 20 years of ministry service.

Jones and his wife, Brenda, founded the Selah Says Society named after their daughter, Delah, who was born with Down syndrome and later was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The 501(c) (3)



Jeff Jones

non-profit helps children "beat the effects of medical protocol" and find better treatment for life-threatening illnesses, Jones said in a release.

His family's exposure to this and other related children's health issues have propelled him to the causes of families and the need for advocacy.

Jones was raised in Dearborn and is father of 11 and grandfather of eight.

His platform rejects partisan politics that has made the current political climate "business as usual," he said.

"Who declares the testing, standardization, and expectations of 28 students in a classroom from southern California is 'normal,'" he said in a statement on his website. "We hear screaming for individual rights while individuality is squelched. How about business, banking, and insurance. How about the National Security Agency, IRS, Food and Drug Administration, American Medical Association and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"What about veterans that cannot find gainful employment or benefits that have value, or psychological detoxification of combat and culture. Do we really want talk about the lottery, gas prices, stock exchange, healthcare and retirement plans.

"I am telling you normal is broken and I plan to work on getting it fixed."

Interested voters can learn more on his website, connect with him on Facebook and Twitter:

— Compiled by David Komer

Fitness challenge contestants lose more than 1,000 pounds

ROMULUS — Several competitors went home with prizes after losing weight in the Mayor's Fitness Challenge at the Romulus Athletic Center.

Romulus business owner Bill Junge lost 35 pounds in eight weeks, taking first place in the men's division.

Lori Tavtigian of Belleville lost 30 pounds to lead the women's division.

Both won one-year family memberships and free fitness classes for a year at the center.

Romulus residents Gary Harris and Yvonne Kraft each lost 27 pounds and were runners-up in their respective divisions.

Each won year-long individual memberships.

Finishing third were Amanda Britz (18 pounds) of Belleville and Mike Blatney (14 pounds) of Romulus.

They won 30 free fitness classes.

Prizes were presented to the contestants who lost the highest percentage of overall body weight.

Mayor LeRoy Burcroff and Andy MacKay, center general manager congratulated many of the winners.

Earning an honorable mention were April Ruot, Tina Woods, Jean Tsouris, Venus Little, Deborah White, Julie Wadsworth and Kevin Terry.

All registrants received two free fitness classes just for registering.

MacKay said a total of 247 competitors combined to lose more than 1,000 pounds.

"As a group, losing half a ton of weight is a great accomplishment," Burcroff said. "The number of people that participated is very encouraging. We only get one body and we should treat it as a temple, as the



Photo credit

Taking first place in the women's division of the Mayor's Fitness Challenge is Lori Tavtigian of Belleville as she receives a prize Andy MacKay (left), general manager of the Romulus Athletic Center, and Romulus Mayor LeRoy Burcroff.

saying goes. We're looking forward to a healthy and prosperous community here and in the surrounding communities. I am pleased that the Romulus Athletic Center is available and contributed to their success."

Junge, who lives in New Boston and owns H & J Manufacturing in Romulus, had a multi-pronged approach to losing 12.58 percent of his body weight.

The 40-year-old said he eliminated carbohydrates, including bread, from his diet, ate very little sugar, had virtually no alcoholic beverages over the two months and joined a basketball league at the center.

He also started running and did some weight lifting and bike riding.

Years ago, Junge was captain of his high school basketball team in Whitehouse, Ohio, and then

he played Division 3 basketball at Defiance College.

Since then, he played in pickup games to stay in shape. He also coaches his two sons' youth teams.

"I got involved in work and family and it took me away from the gym quite a bit," he said. "I hadn't played basketball in three or four years and was looking to get back in shape. Joining a league has been great."

Married 17 years, Junge said he had a family membership at the center for about six months when he saw the fitness challenge advertised.

"I wanted to lose weight anyhow," he said. "I'm a competitive person. Putting this competition out there helped me do it."

Tavtigian said she uses the phone application "My Fitness Pal" to keep track of her weight-loss efforts,

FYI

For more information on programs at the center, visit www.romulusathleticcenter.com or call 1-734-942-2223.

calling it "the best thing ever invented."

Tavtigian said she also worked out at the center and ate fewer carbohydrates. Coincidentally, she lost the same amount of weight a year ago, but finished fifth in the challenge.

Harris, a 15-year city employee, works in the Finance Department at City Hall, where he handles accounts payable and assists in water billing. He said he varies his workout efforts at the center.

"A lot of the time I spend

PLEASE SEE FITNESS/8-A

Riverview Summerfest back after four-year absence

By Jim Kasuba
The News-Herald

RIVERVIEW — When the "Great Recession" struck in 2008, several popular events went by the wayside because communities simply couldn't afford to hold them.

Such was the case with the Riverview Summerfest. The city's annual summer festival was last held in 2009, the victim of the poor economy and prioritizing of resources.

While the economy has improved more slowly than most people would like, things are considerably better now than they were a few years ago. With an improving economic climate and new proposals for funding it, the time seemed right to consider resurrecting the popular summertime community event. Earlier this year, the city's Recreation Commission presented a proposal to the City Council to bring back Summerfest, with some changes.

"They proposed it come back more as a family-oriented event rather than the larger event we had in the past," said Recreation Director Todd Dickman, who sits on the commission.

Dickman, who will oversee the event with the assistance of commissioners, said recreational events and programs in the city have dwindled over the last three to five years because of the poor economy, but commis-

sioners quickly learned that residents missed Summerfest.

"We are looking at a \$25,000 budget for what we want to do," Dickman said. "The city has put aside \$5,000 and they put it on us that we need to find sponsorship. We have some minor sponsors lined up, but no major ones as of yet."

The festival had changed over the years. Over the last five or six years of its existence, it was held as a one-day event on a Friday afternoon and evening, with a fishing derby the following morning. During that time, it was held the same weekend as Cruisin' Downriver, the annual event that brings classic car owners and admirers to Fort Street through Lincoln Park, Southgate, Wyandotte and Riverview.

This year, the festival won't be held the same weekend as the cruise, which is scheduled for June 28. In its return, the committee decided to move up Riverview Summerfest to June 13-14, the weekend when students begin their summer vacation. Planning festival events is still a work in progress, although most of the major features are set.

"We're working on a couple ideas to bring people in on Friday evening," Dickman said. "Saturday would be more of a family day, starting with a pancake breakfast and then fishing

derby. It will open at noon with inflatables, community events, relay races and an ice cream contest. We'll be asking community groups like high school bands to perform on stage to keep things flowing. The plan is to end the night with a movie in the park."

A popular event in the past has been a fireworks display on Friday night of Summerfest, but Dickman said that isn't likely to be a part of this year's festival unless a major sponsor could be found.

"We would love to bring back the fireworks," Dickman said. It's a huge draw. The hope of the commission is to keep building on this every year."

The city continues to seek food vendors and crafts people. Sponsorship forms can be found at cityofriverview.com, the city's website.

As for Cruisin' Downriver, the city will once again be part of the route after bowing out last year due to Fort Street construction. Only one lane in each direction of Fort Street was open in the stretch of the road that goes through the city, conditions that were not conducive for drivers or spectators. Although the city and its businesses along Fort Street normally have not sponsored their own events in conjunction with Cruisin' Downriver, both have welcomed cruisers to the community and will do so again this year.



Photo courtesy of Lincoln Park Public Library

Sparkie, an African clawed frog, is celebrating her 12th birthday. She is the mascot for the Lincoln Park Public Library, which will have a party for her from 2 to 4 p.m. Wednesday, complete with cake, punch and craft projects.

Lincoln Park Library holds birthday party for 12-year-old frog

By Anne Runkle
The News-Herald

LINCOLN PARK — No one at the city library knows the secret of Sparkie's longevity.

From her tank at the circulation desk, the African clawed frog has kept watch over all the comings and goings for 12 years.

The library, 1381 Southfield Road, is honoring its mascot with a birthday party from 2 to 4 p.m. Wednesday. All are

welcome for cake, punch and craft projects. The library staff just asks for an RSVP by Tuesday: 1-313-381-0374.

"We do it every year," library Director Filomena Sgambati said.

"People always ask, 'Is that the same frog that was here when I was a kid?'" Children younger than 6 must be accompanied by an adult, who must stay for the duration of the party.

Sparkie, who predates Sgambati's time at the library, started out as Sparky.

"When they found out she was a girl instead of a boy, they changed the spelling from 'y' to 'ie'," Sgambati said.

Contact Staff Writer Anne Runkle at 1-734-246-0882 or arunkle@heritage.com. Follow her on Twitter at @AnneRunkle1 and Facebook.