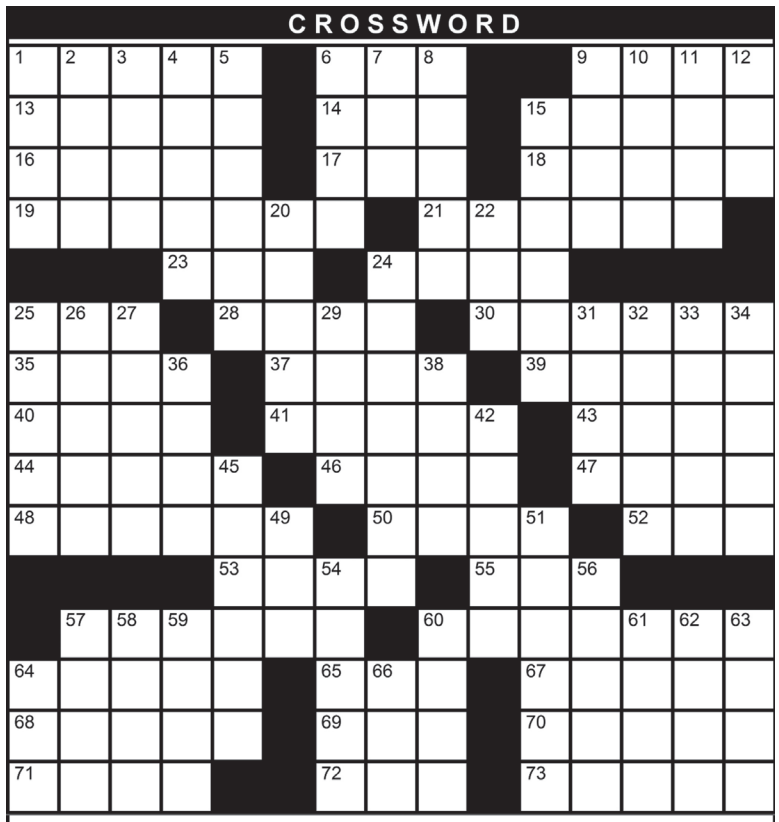
STATEPOINT CROSSWORD PUZZLE • SOLUTION PG. 8

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ALTITUDE

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THEME: HOLIDAY MOVIES

ACROSS

1. Group of pupils
6. Fossil fuel
9. Dust arachnid
13. Abdominal muscle, pl.
14. Grass bristle
15. Like a ballerina
16. Deflect
17. *She played wife and mom in 21 Across
18. Lazybones
19. *It happened on 34th Street
21. *Nicholas Cage 's "The ____ Man"
23. Wednesday's child issue?
24. Mouthful, swallowed
25. ____ Francisco
28. ____ Verde National Park
30. Adorn the halls with holly, e.g.
35. Singer Tori
37. Jailbird's home
39. Tax of one tenth
40. Popular e-reader
41. DNA half
43. Inmate's weapon
44. Loose-fitting top
46. "____ and sound"
47. Performed alone, pl.
48. Madison Square Garden and STAPLES Center, e.g.
50. Snouts or beaks
52. *"____ Takes a Holiday" with Basil Rathbone (1930)
53. Inoffensive manner
55. Long time
57. *Jim Carrey's green grump
60. *Holiday movie time traveler
64. Courtroom excuse
65. Bo Peep's follower
67. Bus commuter
68. Object of Tiny Tim's affection
69. Corn piece
70. Twig of a willow tree
71. Aquatic snakes
72. Pastrami partner
73. Proceeds

DOWN

1. Pack like sardines
2. Denim innovator
3. Maple, to a botanist
4. Scarecrow stuffing
5. "The Goldbergs," e.g.
6. Arc de Triomphe, e.g.
7. Leave speechless
8. Big mess
9. Between mini and maxi
10. Short for "it will"
11. He plus she
12. "Ever" to a poet
15. Marine gastropod
20. Olden day blood-drawing equipment
22. Priest's vestment
24. Like a knight in shining armor?
25. *Billy Bob Thorton's was bad
26. Love, to Napoleon and Josephine
27. Nobody
29. ____ Candies, chocolatier
31. Treat without respect
32. ____ vs. pathos
33. Popular cook-off dish
34. *"Home Alone" main character
36. *Jim Carrey's was green when he stole Christmas
38. *It's wonderful?
42. Three-masted vessel
45. Tabby's favorite herb
49. Pollen ____
51. Feeling at a funeral
54. Holiday feeling
56. Hustle and bustle sound
57. Tar to feathers
58. Tiny river
59. Wading bird
60. Dried up
61. Norse deity
62. Turned to the right
63. Makes mistakes
64. Gobbled up
66. *"Jingle All the ____"

SUDOKU PUZZLE • SOLUTION PG. 9

SUDOKU

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

HOLIDAY SEASON

How to Give Holiday Gifts That Won't be Forgotten

(StatePoint) If your holiday shopping list is focused on all the latest trends, remember, the hottest items are not always the most cherished. Sometimes it's the warmest gifts that are the most unforgettable.

"The holidays are times of nostalgia and remembrance, from stories of when we were children to the smell of cookies baking in the oven," says Christopher Warnack, vice president of marketing and visual at Things Remembered, a leading personalized gift retailer. "Likewise, the gifts you give are not just objects to enjoy now; they should create a joyful memory that can be cherished for years."

To this end, Warnack recommends personalizing gifts with a loved one's name, a monogram, a shared memory, a thoughtful message or an inside joke. "Something that makes it just for them, and only from you," he says.

For a seasonal gift to mark the passing years, consider a personalized ornament or snow globe. Your gift recipient can look back on the ornaments received each year and be reminded of those holiday memories.

Above all, remember to take into consideration the style, hobbies and favorite colors of your gift recipient. You can customize a gift for anyone on your list.

Scarves or jewelry personalized just for her can be enjoyed for years, and with her monogram, become a real statement piece. For him, consider mugs, apparel and other gear that commemorates his favorite sports team, and are sure to become part of his game-day traditions and celebrations. Personalized toys, stuffed animals and other snuggly gifts are great for kids.

Seek out gifts at retailers that specialize in customized items, such as Things Remembered, which can create one-of-a-kind gifts in an about an hour (and a little longer for embroidery and other specialized techniques). For more unforgettable gift inspiration, visit ThingsRemembered.com.

"Everyone remembers the best gift they ever received," says Warnack.

Make someone's season by giving gifts that create new and happy memories with the people you care about the most

LEE LULL HELPING VETERANS COUNTY WIDE

By DEBRA HAIGHT

ST. JOSEPH - November is the month during the year when people once again remember the sacrifices and service of military veterans over the decades and the centuries. For Berrien County Veterans Service Officer Lee Lull, it's his focus year round as he works to help Berrien County's nearly 12,000 veterans in any way he can.

Lull, a Navy veteran himself, has had his position as the county's leading veterans' advocate for over four years. He first applied in the 1990s when Don Olivia was chosen for the job and then later when Dan Stice got the post. Lull was chosen when Stice retired in 2012. "It shows that tenacity pays off," he said.

"It always seemed like it would be a very interesting job," he said. "I was in the Navy Reserves when I first applied. I retired from the Navy Reserves in 2006. I was in active service for four years after high school and then spent 17 years in the Reserves. I retired as a yeoman chief petty officer."



Lee Lull talking with World War II Navy veteran Joseph Bata, 91, of Niles.

Lull was on active service from 1980-84 and was overseas as part of the Indian Ocean-Iran Operations in 1981. He currently is a member of Bridgman American Legion Post 331, VFW Post 1137 in Benton Harbor, Amvets Post 1978 in Niles and the DAV Post 17 in Benton Harbor.

A Berrien County native and currently a Sawyer resident, he first got interested in working for county government when he was 17 and went to the courthouse in St. Joseph to get a copy of his birth certificate. "I thought it would be a good place to work so I applied when I got out of the Navy," he said.

"I applied 19 times before I got my first interview and I didn't even get a job at first after that interview," he added. "But they were impressed with my tenacity and they called me when it didn't work out with the first person they hired."

Lull's tenacity in wanting to work for the county and for veterans in particular is symbolic in many ways of his approach to serving veterans. "When I want something, I never ever give up," he said. "With the Veterans Administration, you have to be that way. They will tell you no at least a couple of times before they approve anything."

While the medical aspects of his job were new, he was pretty familiar with the legal aspects of helping veterans from his years of working in the Berrien County Trial Court. "I had had 25 years working in Probate Court as the deputy probate register, that prepared me for the legal aspects of the job," he said.

"The medical aspect was a big shock," he acknowledged. "It's a never-ending process when it comes to investigating the medical stuff, but it's exciting and I enjoy it."

"I do anything that is veteran related," he said. "The majority of my work is helping veterans with disability and compensation claims. The biggest population of veterans are from the Vietnam era but we get veterans from other eras back to World War II and forward to the present day."

He said a misconception some older veterans have is that a medical issue they have now isn't related to their wartime service. "I still do a lot of disability claims for World War II veterans," he said. "A lot of them don't know they're entitled to benefits and don't realize that the things they're suffering now relate back to then."

As for veterans from the Vietnam era, he said over half of what he deals with involve Agent Orange and PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) issues. In addition, there are other less well-known issues that he educates veterans and their families about including the water contamination from the 1950s to the 1980s at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

While Lull's office is in the Berrien County Administration Center on Main Street in St. Joseph, he's often out in communities around the county. He visits senior centers around the county throughout the year and also speaks to veterans groups and service clubs.

"I go to senior centers, service clubs and all veterans related organizations and I try to get the word out in newspapers and on the radio," he said. "A lot of times, people learn about my office and hear about us through word of mouth."

He encourages all veterans as well as family members to take advantage of the assistance he can provide. He can help people on a variety of medical, legal, financial and educational issues and get them in touch with others who can help as well.

Lull is proud of all his office has been able to do for veterans including coordinating volunteer drivers who take veterans to Battle Creek and other locations as well as providing a place where veterans can meet representatives of other organizations.

For example, people from the South Bend Vet Center come to the Administration Center every Thursday to provide counseling and otherassistance.Inaddition, representatives from the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund come to the center every Tuesday to meet with veterans.

MDOT'S REALITY CHECK: "REPLACING PERFECTLY GOOD SIGNS"

November 4, 2016 -- As the days get shorter and nights get longer, and daylight saving time ends this weekend, the need for drivers to be able to see road signs in the dark becomes more critical. How signs appear at night - when the majority of fatal crashes occur - is a chief consideration of the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) sign replacement program.

The latest installment of MDOT's Reality Check series videos looks at the myth that the department is replacing "perfectly good signs." While a sign may be very visible during the day, they lose their ability over time to reflect light back to drivers' eyes, making them less visible when the information they contain is most crucial.



"A sign that may look 'perfectly good' during the day isn't always visible at night, and that's a safety concern," said State Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle. "Time, weather, and other factors degrade our road signs over the years, which is why we replace them every 15 to 20 years."

The video and fact sheet also explains why this 100 percent federally funded program also replaces sign posts, and does not use funds that would otherwise be available for road and bridge maintenance.

Reality Check #8: MDOT is replacing perfectly good signs

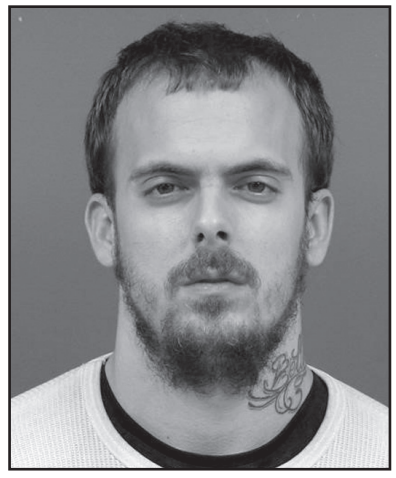
Myth: Our roads and bridges need repair, so why is MDOT wasting money replacing perfectly good signs?

Reality: MDOT replaces signs and posts regularly to keep them visible at night and current with federal safety guidelines.

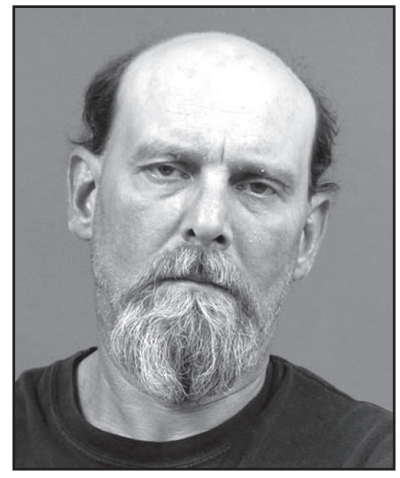
MDOT will continue to take on more transportation myths. Earlier myths, and the facts that deflate them, are available at www.michigan.gov/realitycheck. Media outlets are welcome to link to the fact sheets, or broadcast the videos.

BERRIEN COUNTY TRIAL COURT NEWS

By DEBRA HAIGHT



Nathan Andrew Phillips



James Leon Gaston, Jr

NILES - A summer crime spree at bank and credit union locations throughout the county has landed a Niles man in jail.

Nathan Andrew Phillips, 25, of James Street in Niles, pleaded guilty to two counts of uttering and publishing and one count of unlawful use of an automobile and was sentenced Monday in Berrien County Trial Court to probation, jail and more than $10,000 in restitution.

Phillips was placed on five years probation in the Swift & Sure Program, 240 days jail, 180 days tether, $10,621.39 in restitution and $1,898 in fines and costs. He has credit for 68 days already served. He can serve the remainder of his jail term in the Kalamazoo Probation Enhancement Program.

The incidents occurred between July 30 and Aug. 15 at Chemical Bank and United Federal Credit Union locations throughout the county. Phillips would pass no account checks through the bank and credit union by depositing checks, taking most out in cash and putting a small amount in a savings account.

Chemical Bank locations he visited included branches on Cleveland Avenue near St. Joseph at Orchards Mall in Benton Township and at branches in Niles and Niles Township. He then took a U Haul truck from Pete's Marathon in Niles and fled to South Carolina to avoid arrest.

Berrien County Trial Judge Angela Pasula warned Phillips that this is his last chance to stay out of prison. "I'm putting you on probation," she said. "If you don't turn your life around, you're going to prison."

"This was truly a crime spree, you wrote eight separate bad checks that you deposited and then withdrew money. This was premeditated, well thought out and very methodical. You then rented and picked up the truck and left."

Pasula noted that Phillips has been on probation before and had it revoked, been to jail two times and prison once as an adult. He also had five theft-related juvenile offenses. "You have not learned from your mistakes and bad behavior," she said.

Phillips and his attorney, Albert Mais, said he suffers from a bipolar disorder and hadn't been taking his medications recently. "I did very stupid things, I'm very sorry for what I did," Phillips said. "I ask for one last chance, I need to get back on my meds ... I messed up, I don't want to be in this predicament again."

In another sentencing, a Berrien Township man is going to prison after striking his wife with his car in late September.

James Leon Gaston, Jr, 45, of Deans Hill Road in Berrien Springs, pleaded guilty to operating while intoxicated causing serious injury and third offense drunk driving.

He was sentenced in Berrien County Trial Court to two concurrent prison terms. Berrien County Trial Judge Angela Pasula sentenced Gaston to a term of 20 months to five years in prison on the causing serious injury count and a term of 13 months to five years in prison on the third offense drunk driving count.

Gaston must pay $1,756 in fines and costs and will have his license revoked. A restitution hearing could be set within the next year if the victim requests it. He has credit for 46 days already served.

The incident occurred Sept. 29 in Berrien Township. Gaston's wife, Sandra, 50, was walking on the roadway near the entrance to Shamrock Park when she was struck by a 2003 Chevrolet Cavalier driven by her husband. Sandra Gaston was taken to Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo and reportedly remains paralyzed from the waist down.

Blood tests taken at the time found James Gaston to have a blood alcohol level of .25, more than three times the legal limit.

Monday, Gaston and his attorney, Shannon Sible, maintained that his actions were not intentional. "He is very concerned about his wife and about her getting rehabilitation and having a place to live," Sible said. "He blames himself although he maintains it was not intentional."

Assistant Prosecutor Cortney O'Malley had a different view. She said that there were witnesses who said they saw the couple fighting and who said they saw him backing up at a high rate of speed and hitting her.

"This is his first felony conviction but it is an extremely serious case," she said. "The defendant was extremely intoxicated and he caused a life threatening situation for his wife."

Judge Pasula said it was unclear to her whether Gaston struck his wife with his car intentionally or as the result of being under the influence "or a a little bit of both." "You backed up at a high rate of speed and struck your wife," she told Gaston. "She was thrown quite a ways and is possibly paralyzed by the waist down."

"You initially lied about your actions," she noted. "You've been to jail 10 times before and you have two prior drunk driving convictions. My first question is why in the world would you be back here again for drunk driving. It's your responsibility to drive in a sober, responsible manner."

"I am hopeful that your wife survives," she said. "I don't know if it will prove fatal but it is life altering and it could have been avoided. This was 100 percent under your control to drink and get behind the wheel.

DEADLY OPIOID CARFENTANIL CONFIRMED IN MICHIGAN

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Wayne County are confirming 19 deaths in Wayne County since July that could be linked to carfentanil overdoses.

"With the confirmation that carfentanil has been linked to at least 19 deaths in Wayne County, residents and healthcare providers should be on alert to the dangers that carfentanil poses," said Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive with the MDHHS. "Opioid and heroin use alone can be fatal. With the introduction of carfentanil to the drug supply, the risks of use are even greater."

The Wayne County Medical Examiner reported 19 deaths associated with carfentanil, and in all cases where it was present, it was combined with other opioids including heroin, U47700 or other designer opioids. Over the past week, there has been an increase in severe opioid-related toxicity in southeastern and central Michigan reported to Michigan Regional Poison Control Center at Children's Hospital of Michigan. Many of the patients fit the clinical picture expected with carfentanil but because there is no currently validated testing, these cannot be confirmed. Carfentanil was also suspected but not confirmed in a Kent County case last month.

The Michigan State Police is closely monitoring for the presence of carfentanil in Michigan and working with its public safety partners to thoroughly investigate possible cases involving carfentanil.

Mixed with heroin, and sometimes sold in pill form, carfentanil puts Michigan residents at great risk of accidental overdose and death due to the extreme potency of the drug. The onset of adverse health effects – disorientation, coughing, sedation, respiratory distress or cardiac arrest, and death – occur within minutes of exposure. The drug is 10,000 times stronger than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl, according to the National Institutes for Health. The use of carfentanil has been linked to multiple overdose deaths in Ohio.

"The street drug supply is probably more dangerous than usual because of carfentanil," said Dr. Carl Schmidt, Wayne County chief medical examiner. "There are other derivatives of opiates that may be present as well, and may be more potent than fentanyl already is. As always, purchasing street drugs comes with a risk—you may get something other than what you think you bought."

Carfentanil is often used to tranquilize large animals and is not approved for human use because of its extreme potency. People and animals such as canines may absorb carfentanil, fentanyl, and other opioids via skin contact, inhalation, oral exposure, or ingestion.

MDHHS is urging all hospitals, local health departments, emergency medical services agencies, and first responders to be alert for patients with suspected heroin overdose who do not respond to naloxone in the usual way. They should treat unknown chemicals and substances with extreme caution and call the Michigan Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 with questions.

For Michigan residents, to find help dealing with substance abuse, contact your physician, local health department or community mental health agency. If you or someone you know suspects an overdose, call 911 immediately.