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Sunday
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Negotiations continue at Johnson Controls. A2

Plymouth Observer

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Chief to announce retirement

Plymouth Township Police Chief Carl Berry is retiring.

Berry said Friday that he would announce his retirement to the township board of trustees at their meeting Tuesday.

On Jan. 28, he told the township board he would begin operating a Harley Davidson dealership outside the township.

Plymouth Township Supervisor Kathleen Keen McCarthy declined on Friday to discuss how a new police chief would be selected.

"I have not received official notification," she said. "Until he gives me something in writing, they we'll go from there."

IN THE PAPER
TODAY

Sign up: The first-ever Parents' Day is coming to Plymouth-Canton in March. Following a keynote speaker, parents will have the chance to participate in two educational sessions. A registration form is available in the Observer. /A3

TASTE

Chocolate: From the Halls of Montezuma comes a treat for you and me, sweet, smooth, creamy, chocolate. /B1

2 Unique: Chef Kelli L. Lewton shares recipes for a romantic Valentine's dinner for two. /B1

ARTS & LEISURE

Art: Members of local arts communities are excited about a Monet exhibition planned for early 1998 at the University Michigan Museum of Art. /C1

Music: Legendary flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal will lead a parade of stars at the fifth annual Michigan Flute Festival. /C1

SPORTS & RECREATION

Hitting the slopes: Instead of skis, folks are grabbing their boards and heading for the hills. Snowboarding attracts many western Wayne County enthusiasts to Michigan slopes. /D6

INDEX

Announcements	12	Rentals	G3
Autos	14	Malls	B6
Crossword	G4	Movie Guide	C4
Jobs	G6	Sports	D1
Home & Service	I3		
Merchandise	I2		
Pets	I4		
Real Estate	G1		

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Districts eyed for upgrades



State-allowed Principal Shopping Districts are proposed as a means of paying for street and lighting improvements in Plymouth business areas. Millage would be collected from businesses.

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER

To pay for street and lighting improvements to Plymouth business areas outside of downtown, the city administration is proposing the creation of districts where millage could be collected from businesses.

State law allows creation of such Principal Shopping Districts. The

Downtown Development Authority last year proposed one for the Downtown Development District.

Officials said then that the reason to create a downtown principal shopping district would be to raise a proposed 5 mills from businesses, an estimated \$90,000 per year, for promotion.

But now city officials say they see

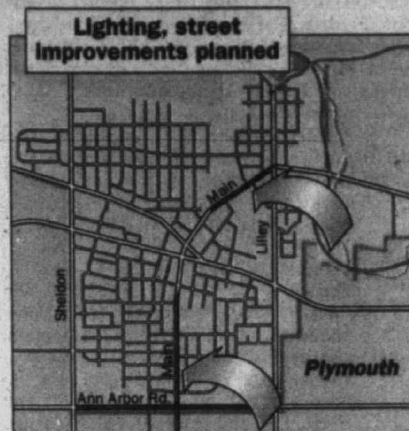
the benefit of creating two more principal shopping districts, to raise money for street and lighting improvements.

As reported to DDA members at their monthly meeting Thursday, one such proposed district would cover Main Street from just north of Daly's Restaurant to Wing Street, the downtown development district southern boundary.

That district would continue along Ann Arbor Road, from Lilley west to Sheldon Road.

Another proposed district would

See DISTRICTS, A2



Key chain prompts concern

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER

A flammable liquid found in a child's ball-end key chain Tuesday got the attention of the Plymouth Community Fire Department, which had the item removed from shelves.

Fire Chief Larry Groth said the liquid - splashing around a tiny plastic frog inside a clear plastic ball - is a petroleum product.

"In our opinion it is an unsafe product to put in the hands of a child and to put near any open flame," he said.

"It could make a kid extremely sick."

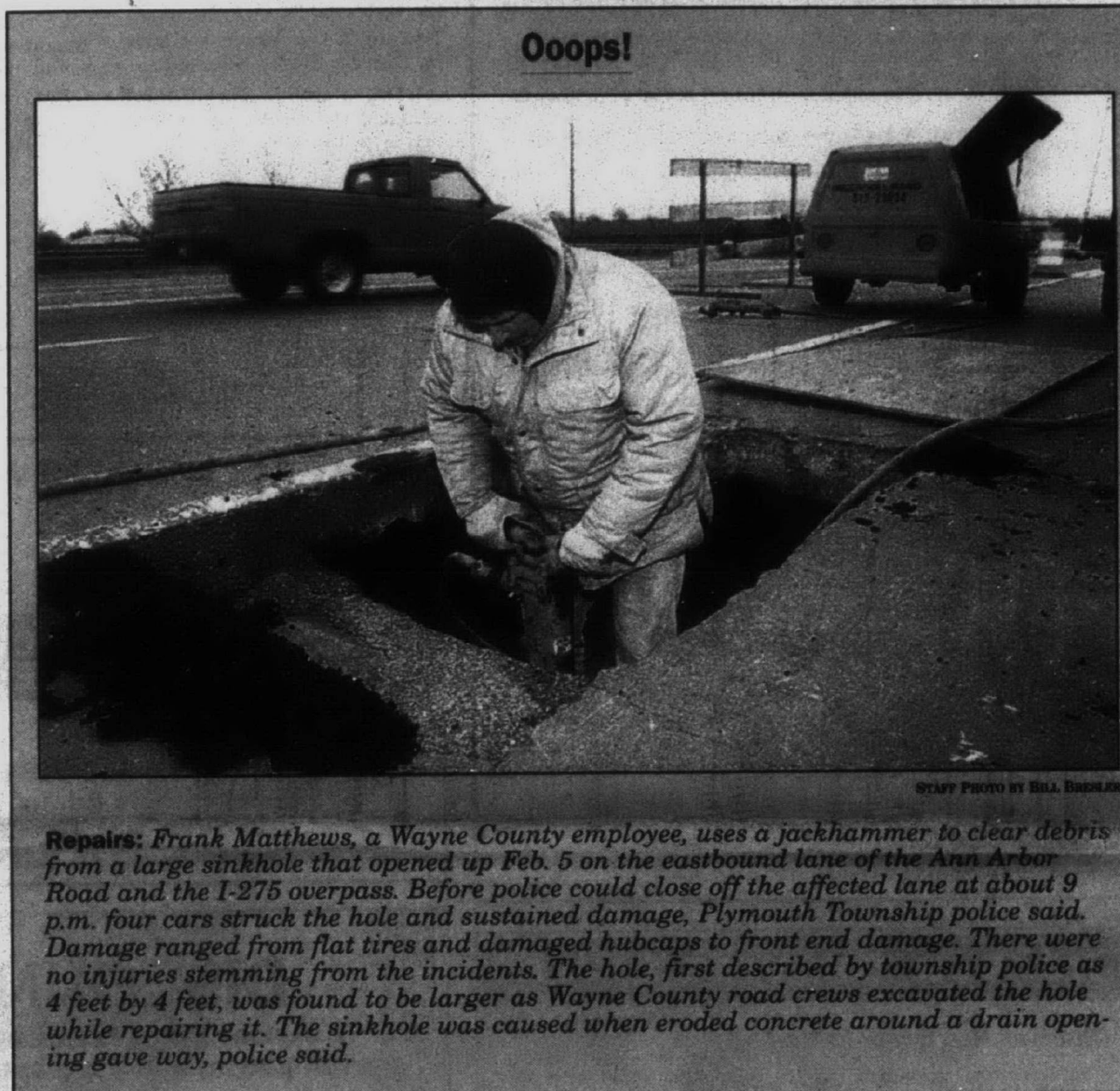
The fire department became aware of the item Tuesday afternoon when a Plymouth woman came into the fire station offices.

The woman told the fire department she'd bought the \$2.49 key chain for her son at a party store at

See FROG, A2



Concerned: Assistant Fire Chief Al Matthews displays a Frog Keepsake key chain.



Repairs: Frank Matthews, a Wayne County employee, uses a jackhammer to clear debris from a large sinkhole that opened up Feb. 5 on the eastbound lane of the Ann Arbor Road and the I-275 overpass. Before police could close off the affected lane at about 9 p.m. four cars struck the hole and sustained damage, Plymouth Township police said. Damage ranged from flat tires and damaged hubcaps to front end damage. There were no injuries stemming from the incidents. The hole, first described by township police as 4 feet by 4 feet, was found to be larger as Wayne County road crews excavated the hole while repairing it. The sinkhole was caused when eroded concrete around a drain opening gave way, police said.

Kids approve new principal

BY M.B. DILLON
STAFF WRITER

If you let students and staff be the judges, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools made a good choice in naming Thomas Owens to succeed Cheryl Johnson as Pioneer Middle School principal.

Selected as interim principal in July, Owens was recently hired for the \$76,604 position. He served as

assistant principal at West Middle School from 1990-1996.

"He's fun," said sixth-grader Andy Brown. "He is not really mean, and not really strict. He likes to go around and talk to people and make sure the rules are being followed."

"He's pretty cool," said eighth-grader Kyle Smith.

"He is great, because he keeps school under control," said eighth-

grader Amber Williams.

Student Norajan Karas agreed. "He's nice. He doesn't yell or anything. He tells us what to do; he's comfortable to talk to. If something goes wrong, he will be there to help."

Aware a reporter was visiting Owens Monday, secretaries posted signs in his office saying "Tom's a keeper," "We love Tom," and "Tom's

See PRINCIPAL, A6

CABLE COMPETITION

Channel surfers get more choices for lower fees

BY KEVIN BROWN
AND LEONARD FOGER
STAFF WRITERS

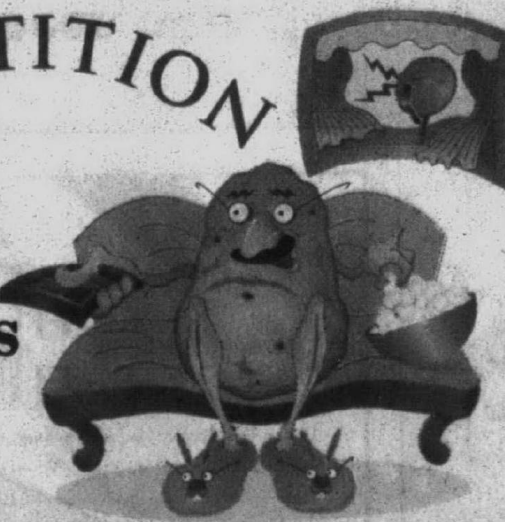
Hey, channel surfers - the greatest invention since the clicker has arrived in the Plymouth area.

Its name is cable TV competition. And it sure makes a difference:

- Free PASS, Disney Channel, and ESPN 2 and more come with basic cable packages in the western Wayne County communities of Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Canton Township and Garden City - because two cable TV companies compete for customers.

- In Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Canton Township and Garden City, residents also get three or more movie channels for the price Livonia or Redford folks pay to Time Warner for just one, thanks to competition.

Ameritech is providing the competition in western Wayne County to existing cable fran-



See related stories on page A5

chises. That competition forced the fall 1995 sale of Plymouth-Canton's old cable firm Omnicom to Continental Cablevision, the third largest cable TV company in the United States.

Continental soon announced to Plymouth-Canton customers that they'd be doing equipment upgrades that matched those announced by Ameritech - then announced premium channel packages and money-off deals to get folks to stick with Continental.

Isn't competition grand?

Ameritech spokesman David Onak said the company will soon expand to Southgate.

See CABLE, A3

AMERITECH - Plymouth-Canton • Competition
■ Basic (18 channel), \$ 9.95/Premiums, \$5.95 to \$14.95
■ Satellite (61 channels including PASS and Disney), \$22.95

■ Converter and remote, \$2.95
■ Has fiber optics entire system

CONTINENTAL - Plymouth and Canton • Competition
■ Basic service, \$9.50/Premium channels, \$8.95 per channel

■ Satellite Service, \$11.45
■ Mini Service (TBS, TNT, WGN, Weather Channel), \$2
■ Converter boxes, \$2.81
■ Remotes, 29 cents/has fiber optics

CONTINENTAL-WESTLAND • No Competition

■ Basic (24-channel) service, \$9.65

■ Satellite (33-channel) service, \$14.79

■ Premium channels: \$8.95 Showtime, Cinemax, The Movie Channel; \$9.95 (basic) HBO and PASS; \$6.95 Disney (PASS will be added to Satellite tier by end of 1997)

■ Has fiber optics, not yet system-wide

COMCAST - Garden City • Competition

■ Limited, \$10.84 (Disney and PASS free)

■ Standard, \$11.95/Preferred Package, \$22.79

■ Premiums: \$10.95 for HBO and Showtime, \$9.95 Cinemax

■ Converter, \$42.19

■ Remote, 13 cents/has fiber optics, not system wide yet

AMERITECH-GARDEN CITY • Competition

■ Basic, \$9.95 (includes PASS and Disney)

■ Premiercast, \$23.95

■ Premium channels: \$10.95 HBO, Showtime, The Movie Channel; \$9.95 Cinemax, The Movie Channel

■ Converter and remote, \$2.95

TIME-WARNER - Livonia and Redford

■ Basic, \$10.30/Standard, \$26.42

■ Converter, \$2.08

■ Remote, 24 cents/has fiber optics

■ Premiums: \$6.95 Cinemax; \$7.95 HBO, Showtime, The Movie Channel; \$9.25 Disney; \$8.95 PASS