



Lions add to offense in first round, B1



Documentaries, dramas celebrate Jewish culture, D1

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Flint, Michigan

REMEMBERING 9-YEAR-OLD SHYLAE THOMAS

Family says GIRL LOVED MUSIC

By Shannon Murphy
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FLINT — With a radio playing next to her, a small smile would cross Shylae Thomas' face as she turned her head toward the sound.

For a little girl who couldn't walk, talk or even hug, her love of music was one of the few ways the family could see the life and the spirit within Shylae.

She was a little girl with big brown eyes and chubby cheeks, her face usually framed by several small ponytails.

She was a little girl with a tragic life marked by a carousel of caregivers who tried — and often struggled



The Flint Journal • Peter Schottenfels

▲ Josette Thomas of Mt. Morris Township holds a picture of cousin Shylae Thomas (also shown below). "To us, she was not a quadriplegic girl that died of malnutrition — she was our little ladybug," said Thomas, who once had custody of Shylae.

— to give the severely mentally and physically disabled girl a good life.

Police found Shylae, 9, dead in a Vienna Township storage unit Wednesday. Her adoptive mother and biological aunt, Lorrie M. Thomas, is accused of second-degree murder in Shylae's death, which authorities say was caused by severe malnourishment.



Lorrie Thomas

"You played music, and she'd

turn her head," said Josette Thomas, a cousin who at one point had custody of Shylae. "She loved voices and would be so happy when we talked to her."

Shylae couldn't do a lot, but even those with low cognitive skills are aware and fully capable of feeling love and care — and the absence of it.

"They do show signs of pain and joy," said Julie Jones, a Community Mental Health supervisor of the child and family services for

► Shylae, A5



Courtesy photos



The Flint Journal • Ryan Garza

▲ Sandy Barber (left) and daughter Kristin of Holly wait backstage for the start of a bodybuilding competition Saturday at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Dynamic duo have strong bond

Mom, daughter form bodybuilding team

By Joe Lawlor
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FLINT — This mother and daughter go shopping together, get their nails done together, pump iron together and compete in bodybuilding competitions together.

Yes, that's right: Mom Sandy Barber, 48, and daughter Kristin, 26, work out two hours a day together at the gym to prepare to show off their muscles.

"We're crazy," Kristin said, laughing.

Wearing sequined, homemade bikinis, the two displayed their rippled backs, toned arms and legs and perfect abs at a bodybuilding competition Saturday at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Sandy pumped 10-pound weights while Kristin performed crunches as they waited their turns to go under the hot lights and

How they did

- In the bodybuilding competition Saturday at the University of Michigan-Flint, Kristin Barber finished in fifth place in the tall category of the open division, while her mother, Sandy Barber, finished in fourth place. Sandy Barber also finished in fifth place in the grand masters division.
- For complete results: <http://michigannpcnews.com>

► Duo, A2

GM knocks down rumors of SPO facility sale

By Ron Fonger
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GRAND BLANC TWP. — General Motors is shedding white-collar jobs and looking for deeper cost-cutting, but selling its Service and Parts

Operations World Headquarters apparently isn't part of the plan — at least not right away.

Two GM employees who asked not to be identified said workers were given assurances about the future of the

\$40-million facility in a recent meeting with Kevin Williams, GM North America vice president and general manager of SPO.

Rumors about the future of the property have circulated for years, helped along as

employees have been shifted elsewhere or laid off, as well as by GM's attempted sale of the ACDelco parts division, which also is based here.

Slightly more than 1,000

► SPO, A2



The Flint Journal • Peter Schottenfels

► Speculation about the fate of General Motors' Service and Parts Operations World Headquarters in Grand Blanc Township is just that, a company spokesman says.

Building on dreams: Home giveaway applicants sought

Don't forget the single dads.

That's the message Venias Beard, 42, of Flint wants to send to

Flint's "Home, Sweet Home" giveaway, which started taking applications Saturday from dozens of people hoping to land one of 13 free homes that will be given away in the next year to one family and a dozen single mothers.

"I need a house," said the disabled, single father of

three. "My kids would love it. They wouldn't be homeless."

The Children's Dream Center, a partner in the program, outlined requirements and handed out applications in front of a four-bedroom, two-bath house on Orange Lane, near Dupont Street and Carpenter Road. The home, which had been stripped of anything valuable, is being renovated.

Larry Holley, a real estate investor and pastor of Abundant Life Ministries, hopes the home giveaway he helped

launch becomes an "epidemic."

"I'm going to ask local leaders to partner with us," said Holley. "We can get these houses, fix them up and give them away instead of having them boarded up. Giving is the way to bring back our community."

Alyse Lathon, 47, of Flint said she's newly divorced and would like a home for her 5-year-old daughter.

For applications and more information, call (810) 233-7128.



Today: Showers and thunderstorms, high 60.

Tomorrow: Showers and thunderstorms, high 79.

► Details, A2

Drawing by Elyse Smith, 8 Flushing



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— Travel, D8

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