

Cascade Connections

Winter 2006

A Newsletter from Cascade Charter Township

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Department Phone Numbers:

Assessing

949-6176

Building / Inspections

949-3765

Clerk

949-1508

Fire

949-1320

Manager

949-1500

Planning

949-0224

Treasurer

949-6944

Sheriff

336-3113

GENEROUS HEARTS



Thank you to all the residents who donated toys and gifts to the Angel Tree program, as well as the Toys for Tots. Your gift put a smile on the face of a child in need.

In addition to the Angel Tree and Toys for Tots, Cascade Township employees along with the Firefighter's Association were able to purchase needed items

for the St. John's Home Kids First Program. Through the generosity of our employee's donations, approximately \$800.00 was collected to purchase holiday gifts for the children. The Kids First Program is an emergency shelter for Kent County children from birth through age 17 who are unable to remain in their own homes due to suspected abuse and neglect.

Our holiday shoppers took advantage of holiday discounts and a number of items on the Kids First Program wish list, not only for the children, but also for the home, were purchased. The Kids First Program asked for decks of cards, Uno, Phase 10, Mancala, CD players, journals, watches, makeup, art supplies and other items. The Township employees were able to purchase items for the house, such as towels, laundry baskets, sports equipment, pots and pans, dictionaries and other such items.

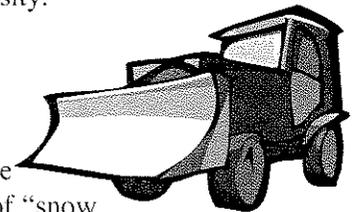
It is a wonderful feeling bringing joy to the faces and hearts of those who really need the extra help. We thank everyone involved for their generosity.

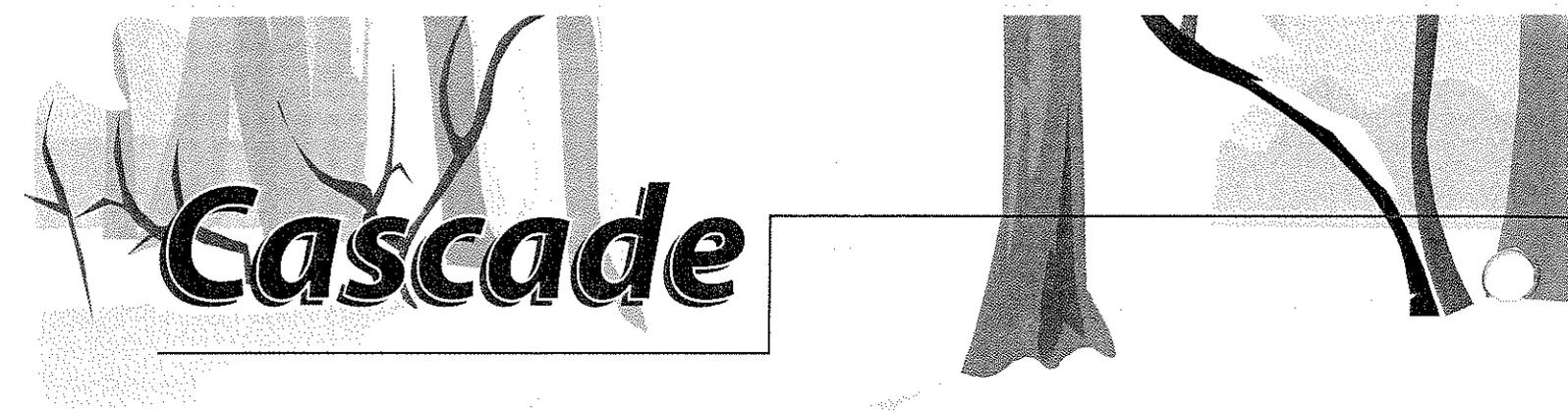
SNOWPLOWING

Snowplowing contractors and the residents they serve should be aware that State law prohibits the disposing of "snow, ice or slush onto or across a roadway in a manner which obstructs the safe vision of the driver of a motor vehicle". The law further states that no snow, ice or slush can be deposited on any roadway or highway (see MCLA 257-677a).

We recommend that residents who have a snowplow service make sure the snow from their driveway is deposited on their own property, not in the roadway, the road right-of-way or a neighboring property. The road right-of-way extends wider than the paved section of the roadway.

If you call the Township with problems or concerns regarding a snowplow contractor, it is helpful if you can identify the contractor.





Cascade

SUPERVISOR'S MESSAGE

Promises Made, Promises Kept 2005

Dear Fellow Cascade Resident:

In 2005 your Township Board set ten goals for our community's government. As it has done in past years, your local government holds itself to a high standard of performance on behalf of our community. I am pleased to again report that these annual goals were accomplished.

Support the efforts of the Cascade Community Foundation to create a separate Cascade telephone directory, as a means to create an identity for Cascade.

Done. Our community's government financially-partnered with the hardworking volunteers on the Cascade Community Foundation to support this new Cascade telephone directory, which was distributed in early 2006. Special thanks go to Claude Robinson, chair of the Cascade Community Foundation, and his very talented colleagues for this new community resource.

Hold 2 cultural events this summer at Leslie E. Tassell Park.

Done. Doubled. (And soon to be tripled.) The Cascade Community Foundation, upon hearing of this new program, offered to sponsor two additional concerts, so a total of four were held. These concerts were so popular, with many hundreds in attendance for each, that in 2006 we will hold 6 concerts at Leslie E. Tassell Park. Please watch the Township Newsletter for the details. See you there!

Coordinate the purchase of parkland or open space with our land preservation funds.

Ongoing. Through the generosity of the August Homeyer estate combined with Township matching funds, over 10 years we will have a \$1,000,000 open space preservation fund. Township staff is in negotiations with one property owner, and we have created a Township subcommittee to develop a natural features inventory to best determine and prioritize land purchases for open space. Open space preservation will be a multiyear effort.

Hold semi-annual meetings with all Township boards, commissions and committees to discuss goals and common issues.

Done. Combined meetings with all the boards, commissions and committees were held Spring and Fall, with good work resulting (see below).

Establish a consistent plan for the installation of sidewalks along 28th Street.

Done. At the Spring, 2005 meeting of all the boards, commissions and committees, a sidewalk plan for both sides of 28th

Street was completed. Engineering and negotiations with property owners is underway, and construction of the sidewalks on the north side of 28th Street is planned for September, 2006.

Review and implement the recommendations in the disability accessibility study (conducted by Disability Advocates) for all Township-owned facilities.

Done. Even though some of our facilities were "grandfathered" as to design changes to provide for disability access, your Township Board decided to set the example and make all township facilities compliant. This was completed in Spring 2005.

Research the feasibility of making Cascade "wireless".

On-going. After meeting with the interim Director of the Community Media Center and discussions with other communities about wireless internet access, your Township Board reached consensus that internet access is something the private sector, and not government, should provide. But, for township facilities, wireless internet access is desirable, and already exists at Cascade Public Library. In 2006, we will likely add wireless internet to Leslie E. Tassell Park and Cascade Recreation Park.

Review various Township programs, including area recycling programs to determine their cost effectiveness and use by Township residents.

Done. Because of the popularity of the Township's trash, leaf and yard waste disposal programs, these will continue in 2006. Your community provides two "cleanup" days (Spring and Fall) for trash and junk disposal and over 600 Cascade households used this service in 2005. In the restricted burn areas of our community, we offer curbside leaf pickup, and over 6,500 bags of leaves were picked up. In addition, yard waste dumpsters are available each Spring and Fall behind the Main Fire Station on Thornhills, and some 1,500 cubic yards of yard waste was disposed of in this manner. As to household waste recycling, since this is done adequately by private waste haulers, we decided to keep your local government out of it.

Work with "The Rapid" to create additional transportation opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities who work in Cascade Township.

Done. We extended our contract with "The Rapid" for Go!Bus service which provides senior citizens and persons with disabilities the opportunity for advance-reservation low-cost door to door transportation. Go!Bus provides rides anywhere in 6 Kent County cities and the townships of Ada, Byron, Cascade and Gaines.

Finish planning and start construction of the library addition, including a history room.



Connections

Done, with grand opening in May, 2006. Construction began in August, and to our surprise and delight, Tom and Joyce Wisner became our lead givers on this library and community center now to be known as the Wisner Center. The Wisner Center will provide much-needed space for the library's children's and authors' and book programs. Township and neighborhood meetings will move there as well and there will be permanent space for the Friends of the Cascade Library's always popular used book sales. The 158-year history of Cascade will also be exhibited by our Historical Society. Our Township Library Committee under the leadership of Charles Fry, the Friends of the Cascade Library under the leadership of Marilyn Meyer and Jacque Miller and Township Clerk Ron Goodyke are to be commended for their special efforts on behalf of our community.

I would like to thank Township Manager Jay Cravens, the department heads and our entire staff for another fine year serving our community. I would also like to thank Trustees Rob Beahan, Brian Currier, Jim Koessel and Sandi Frost Parrish for their support and leadership in our community.

Thank you for your continued support. Have a prosperous and fun 2006. I hope to see many of you at the six concerts at Leslie E Tassell Park this summer.

Michael R Julien

Township Supervisor



ELECTION NEWS

As you are probably aware, 2006 is an election year. There will be three dates that elections will be held this year in Cascade Township. There will be no election held in Cascade Township on February 28; however, on May 2 there will be an election for school board members at Forest Hills, Caledonia and Lowell. Lowell Area Schools will also have an 18 mill non-homestead tax renewal on their ballot.

August 8 Cascade residents will be voting in the primary election for various offices in the local area as well as State offices. While this is a nominating election to determine which candidates will run in the November 7 general election, candidates who have no opposition from another party become, de facto, winner of that office.

Plan to exercise your right to participate in one of the most dearly held expressions of our freedom—the right to cast your vote in privacy and without fear.

The polling places will be the same as last year:

Precinct #1 votes at the Forest Hills Administration Office, 6590 Cascade Road, at the corner of Burton and the Cascade Road.

Precinct #2 votes at the Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church, 6595 Cascade Road, also at the corner of Burton and Cascade Road.

Precinct #3 votes at the Cascade Library Program Room, 2870 Jacksmith.

Precinct #4 and Precinct # 6 vote at the Cascade Christian Church-- Centennial Hall, 2829 Thornapple Drive, at the corner of Cascade Road and Thornapple River Drive.

Precinct #5 votes at the Thornapple Community Reformed Church, 3260 Thornapple River Drive, at Thornhills.

Precinct #7 votes at Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, 6655 Cascade Road.

Please visit the Cascade Township website at www.cascadetwp.com for a precinct map and poll locations.

If you would like to receive an application to vote absentee, please send a letter to the clerk's office at Cascade Township requesting an application. The written request must include a statutory reason why the voter is eligible to receive an absentee ballot and the applicant's signature. A registered voter is eligible to obtain an absent voter ballot if he or she: 1) is 60 years or more of age 2) is unable to vote without assistance 3) expects to be absent from Cascade Township the entire time the polls are open 4) is in jail awaiting trial or arraignment 5) has been appointed to be an election worker outside his or her precinct of residence 6) is unable to attend polls due to his or her religious beliefs. The process for voting absentee requires that you apply before a ballot can be mailed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Clerk's office at 949-1508.

Cascade Township thanks the Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church, the Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, the Thornapple Community Reformed Church, the Cascade Christian Church, the Cascade Library and Forest Hills Public Schools, who volunteer their facilities at no cost to the community, for their essential participation in these elections.

Cascade

Cascade Township office is open to process passport applications daily from 8:00 a.m. 4:00 p.m. Please call the Clerk's office at 949-1508 if you have any questions.

FROM THE DESK OF YOUR ASSESSOR

Assessment Change Notices will be mailed on or before February 25, 2006.

If you are a new homeowner and do not receive your notice by March 1st, please call our office. Registration of deeds and taxpayer name changes at the county level can take up to eight weeks.

In addition to change of assessment, the notice will indicate:

if there was a transfer of ownership in 2005;

if there is a Principal Residence Exemption (formerly known as homestead exemption) on your property for 2006.

Board of Review will hear assessment appeals on March 13 and 14, 2006.

Appointments will be made beginning on February 27. An appeal application and instructions will be mailed to you when you make an appointment.

Sales data and comparative information will be available in the Assessor's Office and in the Cascade Township Library beginning February 27.

Letter appeals are acceptable if you are unable to attend a Board of Review hearing. Four copies of your letter and supporting documents must be received no later than March 13, 2006. Please send them to:

Cascade Township Board of Review
2865 Thornhills Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

An appeal to the Board of Review, either in person or by letter, is a prerequisite for an appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

PROPOSAL Reminders...

Property Transfer Affidavits must be filed with the assessor for any transfer of ownership that occurred in 2005.

Principal Residence (Homestead) Exemptions ...

Filing deadline for new exemptions is May 1, 2006. Exemptions in effect January 1, 2006, stay in effect for the calendar year.

You must **rescind** your exemption within 90 days of the date you no longer either own or occupy the property as your principal residence. Exemptions expire on December 31st of the year you move out.

Taxable Value Cap ...

It is the **taxable** value that is capped by Proposal A – not the assessed value. The taxable value is used to calculate your taxes and is capped at 5% or rate of inflation unless there was a transfer of ownership in 2005, any new construction, field work, re-appraisal changes or any other omitted real property. If there was a transfer of ownership on your property in 2005, your assessed value and taxable value will be the same in 2006 because the taxable value was uncapped.

3.3% is the inflation rate established by the State for 2006.

A special note to those who have purchased property in Cascade Township during the last year ... Please be aware that Proposal A does not authorize the assessor to automatically set the assessed value of a property which has sold at one half of the sale price. An individual sale price may or may not be a good indicator of the true cash value of the property for a variety of reasons. Section 27(5) of the General Property Tax Act states that "the purchase price paid in a transfer of property is not the presumptive true cash value of the property transferred."

Did you know?

Annual changes of assessment are based on sales in the neighborhood. We have at least 75 sales neighborhoods in Cascade. Your neighborhood rarely consists of just the homes on your street.

Your taxable value can never exceed your assessed value.

The May 1st filing deadline for Principal Residence Exemptions applies to new applications only. You do not need to reapply each year.

The assessor is not permitted by State Law to set your new assessment at one half of your purchase price.

It is your responsibility as a taxpayer to review your property record card periodically to be sure you agree with all the information that is currently of record.

The assessing staff is available Monday thru Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Feel free to come in or call 949-6176 if you have any questions on your property. The assessing system is quite complex and we are always willing to help our taxpayers understand how the system works.

BOARD OF REVIEW MEMBERS

Barbara Manus Averil

Bruce Poppen

Sara Fazio

Connections

NEWS FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT...



Cascade Township Fire Department took delivery of the new fire tanker in late November. The purchase of the tanker was made possible due to the passage of the Fire Protection millage

in 2004. We plan to have the tanker in service in the next month after all our firefighters have received proper training on the apparatus.

The tanker is a 2005 International 3000 gallon Tanker manufactured by HME in Wyoming, Michigan. It has a 3000-gallon port-a-tank, hose, ladders and other equipment needed to fight a fire. It can also be used as a pumper if one of our other engines goes in for service. This is a great multi use piece of apparatus and will be a great addition to the fire department.

The tanker is currently housed at Buttrick Station. Please feel free to stop in and take a look at the new equipment.

Attention: Private Drive Residents

Winter time is a great time to trim back your trees and shrubbery for those residents who live on private drives or for those who have long driveways off the main road or street. Our new tanker is 13' 6" high and 10' wide. This means that in case of an emergency or structure fire, the FD will need more room to maneuver our tanker down your driveway. A clearance of 14' high and 12' wide will keep our vehicles from being scratched or damaged. If you have any questions, please call the FD at 949-1320.

Clearance Around Hydrants

During the winter months we ask that you clear snow approximately 3 feet around the fire hydrant that is near your house. Doing this helps us locate the hydrant quickly and easily if it is needed. We also ask that you remove any trees, shrubs, plants or fences around the fire hydrant so we have complete access to the hydrant. If we find hydrants that are inaccessible we will ask you to remove the obstruction or remove them ourselves for the safety of all residents.

OPEN BURNING REGULATIONS



Please read this carefully to determine which regulations apply to you. For purposes of the opening burning regulations, the Township is divided into 2 two areas:

The "Restricted Area" lies north of I-96 and west of Buttrick Avenue.

The "Non Restricted area" lies south of I-96 and east of Buttrick Avenue.

Restricted Area

Not allowed to burn leaves at any time.

The open burning of shrubbery, brush, tree branches and tree trimmings of less than 6" in diameter is permitted on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month from December 1 through August 31 of each calendar year.

Non-Restricted Area

Allowed to burn leaves at any time.

No open burning is allowed on any Sunday during the months of September through November.

These rules apply to both the restricted area and non-restricted area

All open burning requires a burning permit from the Fire Department. Please call their non-emergency phone number at 949-1320.

Materials that may be burned are shrubbery, brush, tree branches and tree trimmings LESS THAN 6" in diameter.

Open burning shall take place between the hours of 8:00 am and 6:00 pm.

Open burning must be of a short duration. "Short duration" is defined as less than 3 hours. No smoke shall be showing after the third hour.

One burn permit per legal burning day per address.

Must be at least 25 feet from any building.

Someone must be in attendance at all times while the fire is burning.

Commercial and Industrial properties may not be issued a permit to burn.

A residential property owner, or his/her agent may clear a lot or parcel for construction of a residential house and may burn if they are in compliance with the materials being burned and the time frames for burning.

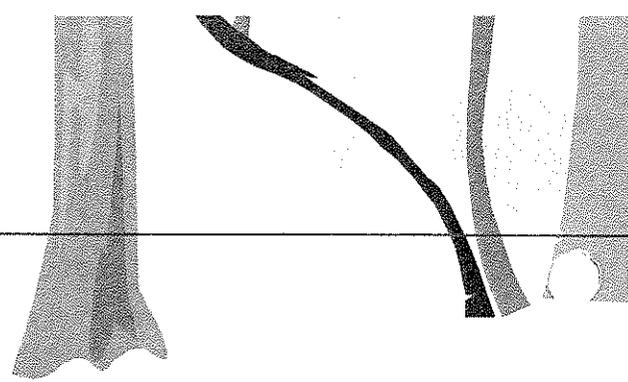
No construction material may be burned.

Nurseries and tree management farms are exempt under the State of Michigan Right to Farm Act and may be allowed to burn with a permit. They must comply with the burning criteria in the unrestricted area guidelines.

A copy of the Township Burning Ordinance can be obtained by accessing our web site at www.cascadetwp.com or calling the Fire Department at 949-1320.



Cascade



"PHYSICAL FEATURES INVENTORY" AND SPECIAL COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF THE TOWNSHIP'S MASTER PLAN

In support of our Master Plan, Cascade Township plans to conduct a "Physical Features Inventory." The purpose of this project is to identify and document the physical features of Cascade's landscapes that are outstanding and contribute to the Township's character.

Chapter 7 of our Master Plan states, "The citizens of Cascade Township will continue to enjoy the natural features of the community as manifested in the rolling woodlands, meadows, wetlands and farmlands, and the clean waters of the Thornapple River and its tributaries." The first objective of Chapter 7 says, "Establish a comprehensive inventory of sensitive natural features in the Township." The Physical Features Inventory will help the township identify panoramic views, views and/or areas where natural landscapes are relatively free of human disturbance, views that are dominated by croplands, orchards, or grazing of livestock, and views which are dominated by significant natural features such as lakes or rivers or creeks, mature woodlands, wetlands, or major topographic ridgelines.

To advance the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, an "Open Space/Natural Features Committee" has been organized. The group includes residents, Board members, and Township staff. The committee is establishing tasks and objectives, and one of the first tasks will be to start the Natural Features Inventory (this process takes several months in order to span the seasons). The Inventory will be performed by a team of specialists, led by a local biologist who has done similar Natural Features Inventories for Ada and Vergennes Townships.

In addition, the Committee will be asking for input from Cascade residents. In a few months, the Township Committee plans to provide a survey asking residents to identify their favorite or most valued "spots" in the Township that they feel have special or beautiful natural features. The survey results will be used as additional contributions to the formal Natural Features Inventory.

The overall goal of the Committee (and this project) is to better

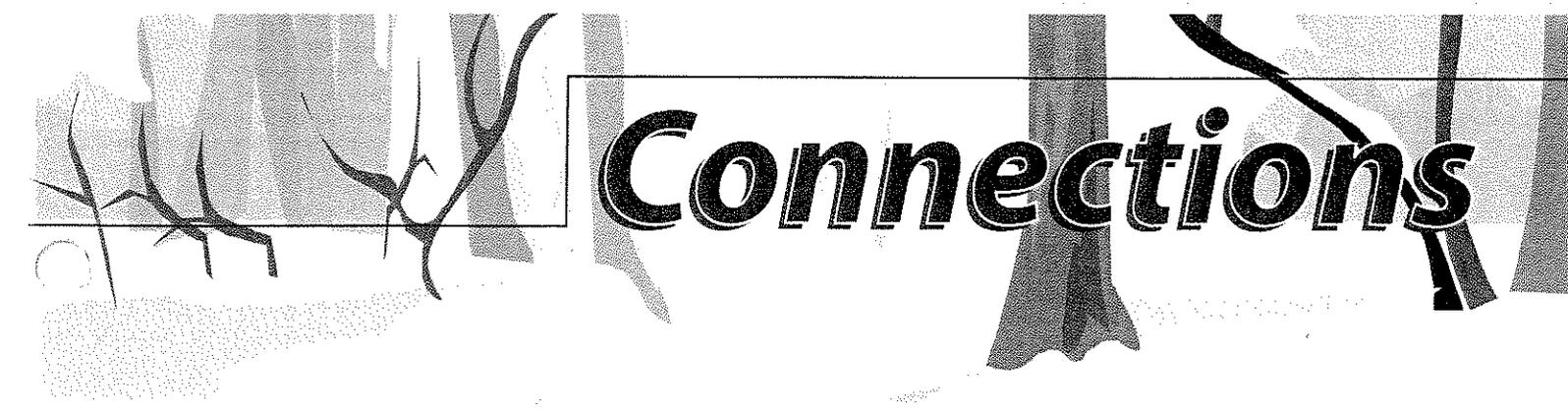
understand the Township's natural features and open space so that improved planning and development are executed in ways that best align with the Master Plan. Our Master Plan must continue to be a "roadmap" that contributes to the quality of life in Cascade Township.

A public meeting on Natural Features/Open Space will be held in the next few months, so read future newsletters or visit the Township website www.cascadetwp.com for dates!

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS OF WISNER CENTER

If you have not checked out the progress of the new Wisner Center at the Cascade Library recently, it is worth a couple extra minutes to peek through the construction window on your next visit. Construction is proceeding on schedule and plans are in place to renovate the existing library with as little inconvenience as possible. A few areas including the program room, which will be revamped into a teen center, and the special services and literacy rooms are already closed, although children's programs will continue to be held. The entire library will be closed March 2-19 and every effort will be made to continue accommodating our patrons. Later due dates on books checked out just prior to the shutdown will be extended and alternate libraries in the Kent District Library system will be available to assist our citizens. Your patience is appreciated during this transition period.

The much anticipated ribbon-cutting for the Wisner Center is planned for April 23, followed by a series of grand opening programs slated for the fall. There are still opportunities available for you to be a part of this exciting chapter of Cascade history. Book tiles of various sizes may be purchased to be displayed in the patron bookshelves at the entrance to the Wisner Center. More details are available at the library. Monetary donations will be allocated for programs at both the grand opening and in the future. The addition to the Cascade Library will serve the needs of many facets of our community, from Early Literacy programs to the teen center to adult readers. The increased program space will allow use by various local groups along with bringing renowned author and speakers to the area. Please check us out and help us *Realize the Possibilities.*



Connections

EAST PRECINCT NEWS...

“Shop with a Sheriff” a success

The Kent County Sheriff Department Community Services Unit had our 4th annual “Shop with a Sheriff” program this Christmas. Our day began at the Alpine Wal-Mart where we took 45 children shopping and continued at the Cascade Wal-Mart where we took 40 children shopping.

This program is designed for those kids who do not have or cannot afford the bare necessities such as a winter coat, snow pants, boots, gloves, underwear, etc. Each child receives a \$100 gift certificate to buy these items as well as a toy. The money is raised through corporate sponsors. Our major donors this year included Wal-Mart, Pepsi, Kawasaki, Johnny Carino’s, and Pizza Hut. We were also able to donate several holiday meals from Famous Dave’s to a few of the families as well. This is our biggest event yet, and next year we hope to be able to provide all of the families with meals for the holidays.

Metro High School Police Academy

Every summer, the Kent County Sheriff Department along with Kentwood, Grandville, Wyoming, and Walker Police Departments, put on a one week police academy for high school juniors and seniors who might be interested in law enforcement as a career. The academy is held at Grandville High School and involves a little bit of everything a police officer in training goes through except driving and shooting.

The dates for the academy this year are June 12-16. If you would like further information, please contact me.

If you have any other questions or comments, please feel free to contact me and I would be happy to do whatever I can to assist you.

Deputy Ryan Coil

East Precinct Community Services

877 Forest Hill Ave.

616-32-6435

Ryan.Coil@kentcounty.org

CASCADE DIRECTORY

The Cascade Community Foundation is pleased to announce the completion and distribution of the first annual Cascade Directory. The new directories have been delivered to all residences and businesses in Cascade. We feel the Cascade Directory will be a valuable resource for everyone. Additional copies are available, free of charge, at the Cascade Township Office.

We have carefully planned for accuracy, however if you notice any errors or omissions please mail the corrections by March 1, 2006 to Cascade Charter Township, 2865 Thornhills Ave SE GR 49546, Attention: Cascade Directory. We will then print and distribute these as an addendum for your reference.

If you would like to be added to the directory or have corrections, please fill out the information below:

Name (please print how you want it to appear in the phone directory):

Address:

Phone Number:

Cascade Connections

CASCADE CREEK

The creek that ran through the Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church property was a spring fed stream that served the Township residents for many years. Farm boys caught a lot of fish in the creek and in the winter they trapped muskrat and mink on its banks. Several hundred feet north of Cascade school, which was on the northwest corner of Burton and Cascade Road, there was a large flowing spring. Steve Den Houten, the resident farmer, built a spring house over this cold, clear spring. Mrs. Den Houten would keep all her meat, milk and other perishables in this natural refrigerator.

Be a part of the Cascade Historical Society. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 a.m. in the Cascade Museum Building located at 2839 Thornapple River Drive. For more information, please contact Mary Carpenter at 949-6944.



Cascade Charter Township

2865 Thornhills Ave SE
Grand Rapids MI 49546
phone: 616.949.1500
fax: 616.949.3918
www.cascadetwp.com

PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 653
GRAND RAPIDS MI