

Monday
May 28, 2007
DAILY BRIEFING

**Notices of courts
and public places**

Please be advised that the Wayne County Probate Court will be closed in observance of Memorial Day on Monday, May 28, and will reopen on Tuesday, May 29, at 8 a.m.
MILTON L. MACK JR.
Chief Judge, Wayne County Probate Court

The Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan Civil, Criminal, and Family Divisions will be closed on Monday, May 28, in observance of Memorial Day.
MARY BETH KELLY
Chief Judge, Third Circuit of Michigan

The Wayne County Clerk's office will be closed Monday, May 28, in observance of Memorial Day.
CATHY M. GARRETT
Wayne County Clerk

Please be advised that the Wayne County 36th District Court will be closed on Monday, May 28, in observance of Memorial Day. Only Criminal arraignments will be conducted.
MARYLIN E. ATKINS
Chief Judge, 36th District Court

Free Legal Aid Clinic offers thanks for help

The Free Legal Aid Clinic of Wayne State University Law School would sincerely like to thank the following for the very successful fund-raiser on April 19. The clinic appreciates all the dedication of those who helped, including:

- The Legal Aid and Defender Association
- Ron and Mary Anne Helveston
- Goodwill Printing
- The Cat's Pajamas including:
- Judge Whalen
- Barry Goldman
- David Hardesty
- Dan Bretz
- John Richards
- John Runyan
- The Detroit Lions
- The Detroit Tigers

An Annual Spring Reception for the clinic is held at the home of Ron and Mary Anne Helveston. This reception and fund-raiser is in celebration of the many years of legal assistance that the clinic is able to provide to low-income residents.

City Council votes to allow deputies on buses

DETROIT (AP) — City Council members have approved using an \$11.7 million federal grant to put sheriff's deputies on public buses.

The 5-4 vote last Thursday will allow police on buses for the first time since 2005 when Detroit officers were removed due to budget constraints.

"We've been looking for an opportunity to fill the gap," said Matt Allen, spokesman for Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.

City buses were back on the road last Thursday, but without the police protection drivers demanded during last Wednesday's one-day walkout. About 120,000 people were forced to find alternate transportation.

The mayor's office sought to have Wayne County sheriff's deputies ride buses on an emergency 24-hour basis beginning last Thursday morning, but that measure failed to get approval last Wednesday from a majority of council members.

Messages seeking comment were left with the drivers' union, which represents 970 Detroit Department of Transportation bus drivers.

Allen said he wasn't sure when deputies would begin riding buses.

When that time comes, at least 40 deputies would be assigned to ride the buses, sheriff's department spokesman John Roach said.

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The Michigan Trial Lawyers Association hosted its 62nd annual convention and banquet on Saturday, May 5, at the Hyatt Regency Dearborn. Enjoying the event was (left to right) MTLA Past-President Bryan Waldman, Sinas Dramis Law Firm, Lansing; MTLA Past-President Michael Pitt, Pitt, Dowty & McGehee, Royal Oak; Incoming MTLA President Robert Raitt, Gursten, Koltanow, Gursten, Christensen & Raitt, Southfield; MTLA Treasurer Barry Gates, Ann Arbor; MTLA President-Elect, Judith Susskind, The Thurswell Law Firm, Southfield; MTLA Past President Barry Goodman, Goodman &

Acker, Southfield; outgoing MTLA President Jesse M. Reiter, Gregory & Reiter, Bloomfield Hills; MTLA Past President Barry Waldman, Sachs Waldman, Detroit; MTLA Past President Carol McNeillage; MTLA Past President George T. Sinas, Sinas Dramis Law Firm, Lansing; MTLA Past President Kathleen Bogas, Eisenberg & Bogas, Bloomfield Hills; MTLA Past President Norman Tucker, Sommers Schwartz, Southfield; MTLA Vice President Richard Warsh, Southfield.

Photo by John Meiu

Trial Lawyers Association hosts convention, honors Byrum

The Michigan Trial Lawyers Association awarded former House Minority Leader, former Senator and former Ingham County Commissioner Dianne Byrum their "Champion of Justice" award on Saturday, May 5, at the 62nd Annual MTLA Convention Banquet hosted at the Hyatt Regency Dearborn.

Speakers at the banquet included U.S. Senator Carl Levin, U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Iowa Congressman Bruce Baley and Political Satirist Ted Rall.

MTLA President Jesse M. Reiter of Gregory & Reiter, P.C., presented the Champion of Justice Award to Byrum.

"Each year the proud members of MTLA present the Champion of Justice Award in appreciation of that person's commitment to the civil justice system and to helping to preserve the rights of others," Reiter said.

In 2002, Byrum became the first woman ever elected to lead a caucus in the Michigan House of Representatives. Byrum quickly gained a reputation for championing populist issues and using aggressive, innovative communications techniques and media to frame the debate in the legislature, protect incumbents in competitive seats and create an issue environment favorable to candidates.

In 2004, Byrum stunned observers by gaining five seats — the best performance for Democrats in nearly 20 years. She made history by following in 2006 with a pick-up of six seats, enough to decisively swing the House in her party's favor.

Byrum is a partner in the advocacy communications firm Byrum & Fisk in East Lansing. She has a Bachelor's of Science degree from Michigan State University with a minor in Political Science. She owns two hardware stores. She is married to Jim Byrum, president of the Michigan Agri-Business Association. Her daughter, Barbara, is a state representative. Her son, Jim, works for General Motors Corporation.

U.S. District Court congratulates scholarship winners



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT Chief Judge Bernard A. Friedman (far right), Eastern District of Michigan, congratulates the recipients of the Ralph M. Freeman Law School and College Scholarships. The court honored the recipients in a special session on Monday, May 7, at the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse in Detroit. Recipients included (left to right) Joshua Purdy, Andrea Przybysz, Paul Lewis, Jamie Worth, Matthew Powell, Evelyn Butler, Gregory Ianelli, Haley Silverberg, and Michael Chichester. Photo by John Meiu

Supreme Court to decide whether gay couples can get health benefits

LANSING (AP) — The Michigan Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal of a ruling that blocks public universities and state and local governments from providing health insurance benefits to the partners of gay workers.

The high court released an order last Thursday granting a motion for appeal filed by 21 gay couples represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan. The court denied their request to stay, or halt, the state Court of Appeals' decision.

The appeals court gave its ruling immediate effect, though many public employers have said they won't take away domestic partner benefits until the case is decided once and for all.

The appeals court in February cited Michigan's 2004 voter-approved constitutional amendment against gay marriage — which makes the union between a man and woman the only agreement recognized as a marriage "or similar union for any purpose" — as also barring domestic partner benefits for the same-sex partners of public employees.

Sixteen of the plaintiffs work for employers who offer same-sex benefits — the city of Kalamazoo, various universities and a county health department covering the Lansing area.

Another five plaintiffs are employed by the state, which in 2004 agreed to provide same-sex benefits but delayed them until courts ruled on their legality.

The appeals court ruling reversed a 2005 decision by an Ingham County judge who allowed public employers to provide the benefits.

The same-sex benefits case is *National Pride at Work v. Governor of Michigan*.

Stepmother and brother charged in 1985 death of 11-year-old boy

BY COREY WILLIAMS
Associated Press Writer

DETROIT (AP) — A woman and her brother were charged with murder in the 1985 death of the woman's 11-year-old stepson, the state attorney general's office said last Thursday.

Rosalind Brown, 50, and Montel Pettiford, 43, are accused of poisoning Christopher Brown, whose body was found in the Flint River about 60 miles north of Detroit.

The attorney general's office did not give a motive, but spokesman Matt Frenedewey said "a lot of interesting family dynamics were in play."

Brown was arrested last Wednesday as she returned to her home in the Grand Rapids suburb of Wyoming. Police arrested Pettiford on last Wednesday as he boarded a bus in his hometown of Flint, Frenedewey said.

Both were arraigned last Thursday on first-degree murder charges. They were ordered held without bond in the Genesee County Jail with a preliminary hearing scheduled for June 6.

Christopher's body was found in the river nearly three weeks after he was reported missing from the home of his father and stepmother, where he was spending Easter vacation.

The sixth-grader's death initially was ruled an accidental drowning. The case was reopened in November 2004 when police spoke to witnesses who weren't interviewed during the initial investigation in 1985, Attorney General Mike Cox said.

"New leads opened up, and there are two cops who were dedicated to the case. One of them was even retired," Frenedewey said.

Genesee Township police Lt. Dwayne Cherry said the department asked Gerald Parks, a retired Genesee County sheriff's detective, to help with unsolved cases in the early 1990s.

"We had a couple of homicides and asked for his input," Cherry said. "Since 1993, he's been stopping in and looking into old cases. He picked up on this one and saw inconsistencies."

Parks and township police Sgt. Terry Clemons began interviewing witnesses and building a new case, Cherry said.

Christopher's body was exhumed for tests, which showed a substance in his system that would have been strong enough to incapacitate him, Cox said.

Christopher's mother, Brenda Simpson, joined Cox and others at a press conference last week along the riverbank near where her son's body was found.

"Today represents the beginning of a new journey," she said. "I fought a long time just to get people to listen to me and believe me when I said my son was murdered. Now, I've got to stand by and have my trust in 12 jurors coming back with that same verdict."

Christopher's father still lives in the Flint area, but is not a suspect in the case, Cherry said.

Rosalind Brown maintains her innocence, said her court-appointed lawyer, Mark Latchana of Flint.

"My client hasn't run from the current information and has cooperated fully," Latchana said. "She has met with investigators and is anxious to show everybody she had nothing to do with this tragic death."

Pettiford asked for a court-appointed lawyer, but court records did not indicate whether one had been assigned to him last Thursday.

Offices closed

The offices of the *Detroit Legal News* will be closed Monday, May 28, in observance of Memorial Day.

Official Newspaper: City of Detroit • Wayne Circuit Court • U.S. District Court • U.S. Bankruptcy Court

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