



## The first Saturday in November

By CHIP CORWIN  
SPORTS EDITOR

In Michigan sports, the first Saturday in November is reserved for the cross country state meet. It is the single largest gathering of high school athletes the entire year, with over 2,000 participants.

The first Saturday in November is the date that Ryan Shay forged his legend in Michigan, becoming the first four-time cross country champion in the state's history.

Exactly 11 years and one day after Ryan won his last cross country state championship, he died trying to qualify for the Olympics on the first Saturday in November.

Eight days after that, he was buried back among the hills and valleys where he pounded out tireless miles in high school, always preparing for the first Saturday in November.

It is redundant, given all the media coverage this past week and a half of Ryan's life and career, to once again extol the virtues we all know he possessed and inspired in others.

I wanted to use the space below this column to reprint a poem, "For the Anniversary of My Death" by W.S. Merwin, but I couldn't get the permissions in time.

So instead, I want to offer up this blank space as a simple, silent homage — not as a sports writer, but as a former northern Michigan prep runner, who, like Ryan, always dreamed of achieving great things on the first Saturday in November.

May he rest in peace.

## Not Again! Gas leak scares Mancelona

Blame for error still up in the air

By HADLEY ROBINSON  
EDITOR

MANCELONA — For a few minutes, it was like history might repeat itself. Fire fighters were out closing off the streets, the smell of gas was floating through town and many downtown could hear a high pitched screeching noise.

At around 10:45 last Thursday morning, Dick Brey, project manager from Meyer Construction of Cadillac, was digging with an excavator for the sewer project on Carrolton and Main streets, when he severed a connection between a six-inch gas main and a two-inch line.

Emergency crews took extra precautions, remembering too well an incident 12 years ago when three buildings were leveled after workers from Meyer Construction struck an underground natural gas line.

Emergency action was taken immediately after the line was ruptured. Mancelona fire department officials told businesses to turn off any open flame and a few minutes later had them evacuate. Mancelona Middle School was quickly vacated too, as 330 middle school students headed across the field to the elementary school. According to School Superintendent



Photo by Joanie Moore

This was the scene mid-morning in Mancelona last Thursday when construction crews working on the sewer system snagged a natural gas line on Carrolton Street between the Law Office of Barry Cole and Mortensen Funeral Home. Natural gas leaked for more than six hours while workers from DTE Energy fixed the line.

Ron Nurnberger, the students followed the emergency plan and were out of the building in about 60 seconds.

People said the leak sounded like a rocket at first.

"The thing that scared me the most was that you could hear (the leak)," Lynn Liberty, owner of Miss Liberty's Flowers said. "I've never experienced

something like that before." Exactly why the gas lines were struck is still to be determined and differs depending on the source. The gas company contends everything was properly staked, but Brey said the stakes were offset four feet and he wasn't notified.

DTE Energy, parent company of MichCon, that owns the gas lines, said "MISS

DIG" precautions were followed and the area was properly staked to show the underground utilities.

MISS DIG is a statewide construction safety and damage prevention call center to stop accidents like this from happening. The excavator calls in to notify of construction in an area and the center sends computerized information to the utili-

ties companies to mark off where to not dig.

Craig Goodrich, project manager from the engineering firm Gourdie Fraser that is overseeing the installation of the sewers, said he had walked the area previously and there were paint marks on existing asphalt and flags where the valve boxes were.

"I know the gas company has been working with the

contractor to make him aware of all the utilities," Goodrich said.

But according to Brey, after Meyer pulverized the road, a representative from DTE came to re-stake the area with flags.

"He re-staked it four feet offset and never said a word about it," Brey said. "He said he told one of my guys, See GAS LEAK, page 10A

## Veterans honored throughout Antrim County

### First area seniors event a big success

By HADLEY ROBINSON  
EDITOR

BELLAIRE — The Commission on Aging room was packed last Friday, as the Area Seniors, Inc. hosted a lunch and ceremony for veterans, their spouses and anybody else who wanted to recognize the veterans.

"This is the first time we've tried it," said Rosemarie Mills of Area Seniors, Inc. "That's why this is so great. We're just tickled pink they all came."

Besides a large turnout of 140 people who enjoyed the lunch prepared by cooks from the senior center, the program and speeches were poignant, and touched many with a sense of patriotism and pride.

Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer (R — Bellaire) came to recognize the veterans and to present two special awards to Bud Hierlihy and Fred Bechtold for their outstanding service.

"It is a great honor for me to give honor to the real heroes," Elsenheimer said. "I stand here humbly saying thank you to each and every one of you."

Both men, Hierlihy and Bechtold were shocked and honored by the recognition.

"I knew Fred should have it," Hierlihy said. "When he said my name, my mouth came open. I never, ever ex-

pected it."

Hierlihy was also a speaker at the event and talked about the history of the national holiday. Nov. 11, 2007 was the 89th anniversary of the ending of World War I, when an armistice was signed in France in 1918.

"As I understand it, around the globe, the world had never seen this much rejoicing," Hierlihy said of that day.

The holiday has changed to now honor all veterans in all American wars.

Becky Folker provided the music during the program and sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and "America" with the guitar.

She was appreciative too.

"Thank you for making it possible to adopt children, and children from a different country who need parents," she said. "It's because of your dedication that I have this right and honor."

Hierlihy said he hoped everybody would think about and honor veterans Nov. 11.

"What you see seated here are the lucky ones. The others are still over there or they're planted in the cemeteries throughout this country," he said. "Say a prayer for our departed comrades who will never come home again."

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### Ellsworth students echo Veterans Day sentiment

By JEFFRAY N. KESSLER  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Many times, Veterans Day celebrations have but one or two dimensions. Parades proceed in straight rows along boulevards of blocks as people line the curbs, shoulder to shoulder, lawn chairs butted to baby buggies. Bands, color guards and ranks of veterans come into view for a short while, filling the tiny periphery of sight afforded to onlookers, and then move on. Moments are fleeting and brief. The crowd breaks up, and folks get on with their days.

That is not how students

at Ellsworth celebrate Veterans Day. They do not let a parade pass them by. Instead, they bring their veterans into a space where they can be patiently and thoroughly surrounded and embraced. It becomes honor in three dimensions.

Early last Friday morning the Ellsworth gym was an empty box, but then junior Jeana Bolser and her set up crew took over. The students' government teacher, Mrs. Lemma (who usually organizes the day) was gone addressing serious medical problems. She had left an outline to help, but it was up to the students to perform without her. "We were ner-

vous about doing this on our own, but it all turned out better than we thought," Bolser admitted.

The gym was converted to a hall of tribute for the veterans. Students, staff, community members and veterans were greeted with star-spangled decor, displays of war memorabilia, a reception area and flowers. Music by the school band filled the air while students Kelsie Drenth and Nolan Howes welcomed visitors from their podium. The 25 veterans that were in attendance were seated in special rows on the floor. All could take their time and feel what See VETERANS, page 8A

## Health Agencies prepared Combine mandatory exercise with practical use

By HADLEY ROBINSON  
EDITOR

MANCELONA — In case of emergency or a mass outbreak, it looks like Antrim County knows what to do.

Last Wednesday, Nov. 7, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan hosted a mass vaccination clinic and actually gave out real flu shots at the same time.

Every year the health department is required to do a public emergency preparedness exercise and must follow rules mandated by the Department of Homeland Security. This ensures that they know the accurate procedures in case of a real emergency.

But Jane Sundmacher, health department public information officer, said she wanted to give this more purpose than just practice.

"Some health departments do a totally fake clinic. Instead of that, we actually give them out medication," Sundmacher said. "If we're going to go through all this trouble we'd

See FLU SHOTS, page 10A



Photo by Jeffray N. Kessler

Mrs. Randall's first graders lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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