

# Gratiot County Herald

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## Executive Director Named for County Nonprofit 'Veterans Heroes Center'

By Rosemary Horvath  
Herald Correspondent

2,200 military veterans residing in Gratiot County will soon have a full-service resource center to access for themselves and their families, according to Bret Hyble, the newly appointed and first-ever executive director for the Veterans Heroes Center (VHC) located in St. Louis.

A joint venture between the American Legion Post 256, building owner, and the county Office of Veterans Affairs, the nonprofit operation plans to be a social gathering hub that will offer various opportunities to help military families successfully transition into civilian life. Issues such as housing, job placement and challenges connecting with the community will be addressed.

Hyble was hired in December by the VHC board and was introduced to county commissioners last week by Veterans Affairs director Nancy Bozzer, who conceived of a full-service center since her hiring.

Located at 1329 Michigan Avenue, the American Legion building has been rehabbed and updated for the VHC, paid for in part with funds the county board appropriated from the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

Hyble, a Mt. Pleasant resident, told commissioners he and county information technology director Matt Hewitt are working on creating a website for the center. He also indicated the VHC would be open at least two days a week in the beginning.

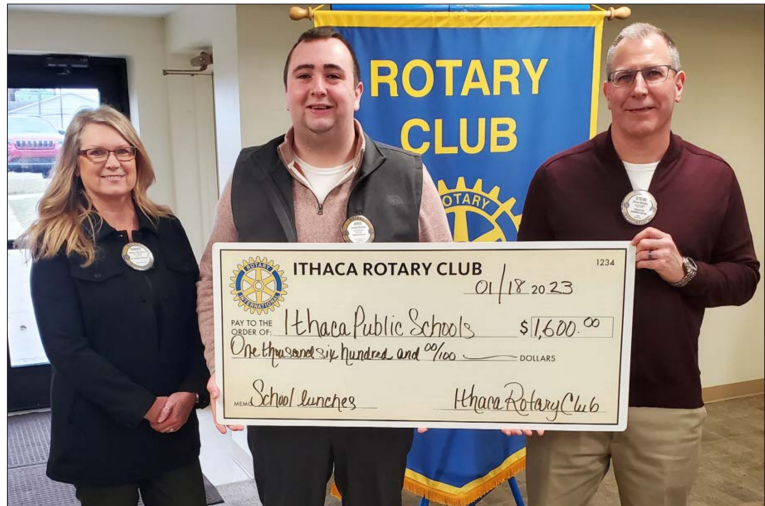
Hyble's experience covers marketing, management, fundraising and community outreach. He is a former president and CEO of the Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce, director of Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works, and a member of various Central Michigan University alumni and athletic groups at his alma mater.

He also has athletic coaching experience from CMU, Northwood University, and Alma College.

He and wife Carol have two adult sons, Brooks and Colton.

Hyble and Bozzer, along with VFW and American Legion posts in the county, invited veterans, their families, and the public to the VHC Grand Opening, Saturday, Feb. 25, noon to 3 p.m. A ribbon-cutting ceremony begins at 12:30 p.m. Heavy hors d'oeuvre and refreshments will be served.

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Representatives from the Ithaca Rotary Club, including Tammy McCollum, treasurer, and Jared Macha, president (center) present a \$1,600 check to Steven Netzey, superintendent of Ithaca Public Schools. The money will help offset overdue lunch fees.

## Ithaca Rotary Helps Offset Costs of School Lunches

By William Meiners  
Herald Staff Writer

The Ithaca Rotary Club recently donated \$1,600 to Ithaca Public Schools to help pay for overdue school lunch fees. That funding, along with alleviating some financial stress on families, helps ensure that all students receive nourishing

meals throughout the school year. "The donation from the Ithaca Rotary club was to help cover some of the delinquent lunch account balance that accumulates over the course of the year," said Steven Netzey, superintendent of Ithaca Public Schools. "We make sure all of our students get a meal

regardless of the status of their lunch account."

Netzey explained that once a lunch account is "in the negative," Rick Bongard, food service director, contacts the family and works with them to get the balance paid off in a reasonable amount of time.

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## Tom's Barber Shop Closes After 50-Year Run in Middleton



Tom's Barber Shop in Middleton, opened by Tom Studer in June 1972, closed up shop earlier this year. One of the last haircuts was given to Studer's grandson, D.J.

By William Meiners  
Herald Staff Writer

He clipped through his last head of hair, unaware of the significance at the time, on the Friday before Christmas. Tom Studer, owner, operator, and sole employee of Tom's Barbershop in Middleton, officially hung up his scissors, combs, and other tools of the barbering trade early this year. The closed shop ended more than a 50-year run in the business.

With some recent health problems, including needed time to recover from hernia surgery, Studer pushed up an anticipated spring retirement to the first of the year. Had he not, he said he would have commemorated that last haircut with a photo. Now, along with the "closed" sign in the window, there's a "for sale" sign out front.

Born and raised in Gratiot County, Studer never went too far from home. At least not for too long. After graduating from Fulton High School in 1965, he spent a year at the De-

troit Barber College, where "I got all the big city I wanted," he said. Later, in the U.S. Army, Studer served in Vietnam from December 1967 to December 1968. He did not cut hair overseas, and instead drove a heavy truck that carried helicopter fuel.

Back stateside, he cut hair in St. Johns before he went to work "for a fellow by the name of Dave Wilcox" in Middleton. "He was from Lansing and his wife didn't like our little town," Studer said.

So about as quick as you could play, "Shave and a haircut, two bits" on a piano, Studer bought the place from Wilcox in June 1972. It made sense to call it Tom's Barber Shop.

A half century in the barber business means lots of repeat customers. In several cases, four generations of families have sat in Tom's chairs. "There's one thing you know being in a farm community," Studer said. "The farmers were pretty loyal and, of course, the Mennonite community was a big part of my business."

See BARBER page 12



## My Go-To Place for Weight Management

"Over time, my weight started to interfere with my passion for the outdoors, as well as my health," said Avery. "It not only became harder to move through the woods and climb tree stands, I had developed high blood pressure and sleep apnea. Four years later and 90 pounds lighter, I feel like a new man. The bariatric surgery team at MyMichigan changed my life! Following surgery, I felt great and was back in the studio recording my radio show a week later. Today I not only feel 25 years younger, I have more energy to enjoy the great outdoors! That's why MyMichigan Health is my Go-To Place."

- Outdoorsman Mike Avery

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## BARBER *continued from page 1*

There were some rough patches over that passage of time. Studer noted that during the "hippie days," neatly trimmed and clean shaven looks seemingly fell out of fashion altogether. Marc Studer may not remember his first haircut, courtesy of his Uncle Tom, but said his parents still have the picture of him "screaming his head off."

Marc has more vivid memories of the barber shop when his family visited his grandparents, just down the street on Newton. "Mom and Dad let us walk down to the barber shop and Uncle Tom always had two chairs in there, including the one he used," he said. "We would sit in the second one and raid a big tub of Bazooka Joe Bubblegum."

Now Sergeant Marc Studer, a Michigan State policeman, would sometimes have lunch with his grandmother and then drop by Uncle Tom's shop. "I would park the patrol car in front and go say 'hi,' which lasted about 10 to 15 minutes before he'd kick me out, saying his customers would be afraid to stop in."

A barber in a small town and a bartender, maybe anywhere,

might become something of arm-chair psychologists. Or scissor-clipping shrink and barstool therapist as it were. "You hear about people's aches and pains," Studer said. "My wife said we probably won't hear any of the good gossip now."

Though all those folks passing through, mostly men aside from a couple of women over the years "if they had regular old short haircuts," brought Studer to work for 50 years. On a busy day, and not in too big of a hurry, he could get through four haircuts in an hour. "It's the same job, but not the same thing every day," he said.

A big sports fan himself, Studer, who has always loved the Tigers, would have chatted frequently with draped customers about the wins and losses of the Fulton Pirates and those events he used to attend religiously. Those contests might have reminded him of his own ballplaying days, alongside younger brothers Teryl and Tim. He played baseball in the county league, manning second base and wearing the number two in honor of Jake Wood and Nellie Fox, two famed second basemen. Later,

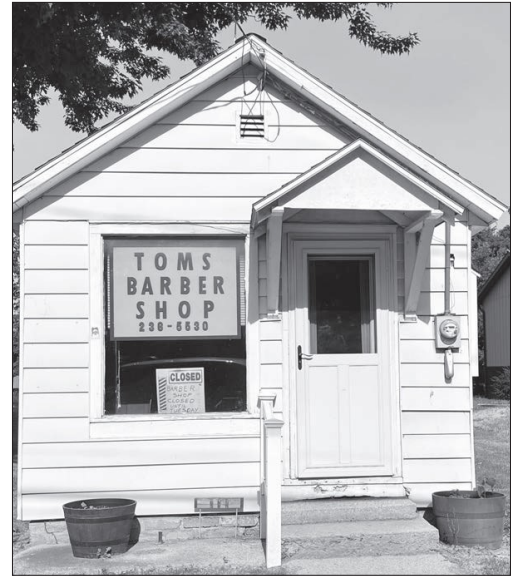
he'd play softball for a team in Perinton.

On the home front, Studer married a woman who lost her first husband in an automobile accident. "I've got three great stepsons and lots of grandkids," he said.

An upcoming granddaughter's wedding in Hilton Head will take them to some familiar territory. "For years, every September we went to Myrtle Beach," said Studer, also an avid golfer back in the day.

There is some bittersweetness to the retirement, in addition to those customers he won't see on a regular basis. You don't see as many of those iconic barber shop poles anymore. The pole in front of his shop was stolen "35 to 40 years ago," he said, perhaps adorning someone's college dorm room.

Studer has hoped that some aspiring barber might purchase the place, keeping the buzzers humming. "I had a couple people talk to me, but it kind of fell through," he said. "Once I get over this health situation, if I don't hear from someone, I'll probably have to list it with a realtor."



The closing of Tom's Barber Shop ended more than a 50-year run for Tom Studer who is hopeful an aspiring barber might purchase his Middleton business.

## ROTARY *continued from page 1*

"Over the course of a school year, some accounts never get paid off, so the total negative balance ends up being paid by the district's food service account at the end of the school year in June," he said. "We are very thankful for the generous donation from Ithaca Rotary.

This will help offset some of the delinquent lunch account balances."

Jared Macha, president of Ithaca Rotary, said the club does several things throughout the year, including grant writing for matching funds from the Rotary Foundation

and various fundraising events. "This year we held a golf outing at the Fields Golf Course with sponsorships and a field raffle, which raised quite a bit of money," he said. "We also did well with the sports schedule, where businesses can put their logos and informa-

tion on the schedule we distribute throughout the community."

In his second year with the Rotary Club, Macha, branch manager of Isabella Bank in Ithaca, is rotating through his year as club president. Each year, the organization focuses on areas related to a mission of improving basic education, child health, and economic and community development. "We come together as a board once a quarter to look for opportunities where we can serve the community, whether

that be through community service or monetarily," he said.

You might liken this donation to "food for thought." Keeping food in bellies can only enhance the education of young minds. "Ithaca Rotary donates money for various local community projects and programs every year," Netzel said. "This year they approached me about making a donation to help with the delinquent lunch accounts and I worked with them on that project."

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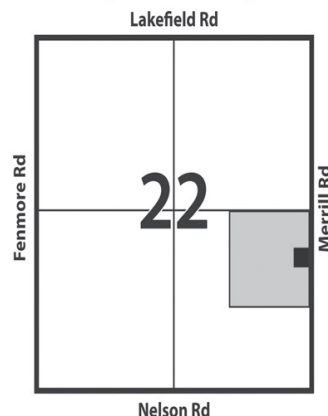
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