

# Mackinac Straits Health Care Providers Say More Women Should Get Yearly Mammograms

By Karen Gould

Since the summer of 2001, Mackinac Straits Hospital has been offering mammograms, which is an x-ray medical experts consider to be one of the most effective means of early detection of breast cancer. The local program reported a record 717 women receiving a mammogram in 2005, and numbers are nearing that same level this year. Karen Myers, an x-ray technologist specializing in mammography at the St. Ignace hospital, says that's still not enough.

Concerns about pain during the procedure, or even the fear of ultimately finding breast cancer, should not deter women from having a mammogram, she says. Most people who have the exam for the first time report it's not as uncomfortable as they had expected. The benefit of mammography, she adds, is that it can detect breast cancer at a curable stage.

"There are so many women still afraid. They hear it hurts, so they don't want to do it," said Mrs. Myers. "It's still a problem."

Dr. Alice Lindsey, a physician at Mackinac Straits Hospital, who refers patients to Mrs. Myers for the x-ray, said it's important for women to get mammograms

because breast cancer, when discovered early enough, is "very curable."

One in eight women in the United States gets breast cancer, said Mrs. Myers.

This year, approximately 212,900 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer nationwide and more than 41,000 of them will die from it, reports Communications Specialist Kelli Kaberle, with the American Cancer Society in Lansing.

"However, if detected at its earliest stages, breast cancer is 98 percent survivable," she said.

"People should not let the fear of breast cancer keep them from having the mammogram," said Dr. Lindsey.

While breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, it is not the most common cancer killer of women, said Dr. Lindsey. Lung cancer kills more women because early detection is harder and the chance for survival, therefore, is smaller. Lung cancer has no early symptoms, she said, but breast cancer does, so such an opportunity to be cured is reason enough to get a mammogram.

Some women also are concerned about radiation given off

during the x-ray as a reason not to have the test, said Dr. Lindsey.

"A mammogram gives off a very small amount of radiation, and it's very well worth the tiny risk," she said.

Once in the mammography room, the entire process usually takes less than 20 minutes. The actual x-rays, which include two views of each breast, takes approximately 30 seconds. The rest of the time is spent preparing for the x-ray, developing the x-ray, updating computer information, and reviewing the film to make sure the x-ray is readable, explained Mrs. Myers.

A radiologist at Northern Michigan Hospital in Petoskey reads the x-rays and reports the results to the patient's physician. Mrs. Myers also follows up on each reading.

A mammogram is recommended for women between 35 and 40 years old and when a woman reaches the age of 40 years of age, she should have a mammogram annually, said Mrs. Myers.

Mammograms are about 90 percent successful in detecting breast cancer, so Dr. Lindsey prefers to first provide patients with a clinical breast exam. Then, if something is questionable, she can have

At right: The Mackinac Straits Hospital mammogram x-ray machine is operated by technologist Karen Myers.

additional x-rays taken of the area during the mammogram.

"Although, if they just would get a mammogram, I'd be happy," she said. "If we could get people to come in every year, we could decrease the mortality rate from breast cancer," she said.

Women are advised to perform breast self-exams monthly and get a clinical exam followed by a mammogram annually. The size at which breast cancer can be felt is about one centimeter in size, similar to the size of a pea, and if tests reveal it is cancerous, it's almost always in an early stage and can be curable, said Dr. Lindsey.

Mrs. Myers said she sees women from Mackinac, Chippewa, Luce, and Cheboygan counties. She has 20 years experience as an x-ray technologist and six years performing mammograms.

More information on self-exams and mammograms can be obtained at the hospital from Mrs. Myers or Dr. Lindsey.



## Radio Racing Takes Off Sat. at St. Ignace

Radio controlled racing will take place at Little Bear East Arena in St. Ignace Saturday, November 18. The doors will open at 9 a.m., and races will begin at noon.

All ages can participate and all electric vehicles are invited to race. No vehicles powered by gasoline or other fuel, including "nitro," are allowed. Vehicles that will be allowed include pan cars, touring cars, 1/8 scale cars and trucks, and 1/10 scale stadium trucks.

It will cost \$6 to race, or \$15 to rent and race a vehicle.

Casey Brake of St. Ignace, a radio control racing enthusiast, is coordinating the event with help from the city Recreation Department, said Erica Cena, recreation coordinator. The event may be repeated monthly.

Anyone who does not have one of the vehicles listed, or is not sure what kind of vehicle to buy, should call 643-0958, or send e-mail to kcbrake@portup.com.

## Sting Reveals 29 Liquor Violations

By Ryan Schlehner

Twenty-nine businesses in the Upper Peninsula were cited for selling liquor or tobacco to minors during a sting operation conducted jointly by police and district health departments in September. In the operation, which is conducted annually, St. Ignace topped the list of communities in the percentage of citations issued.

Overall, 107 businesses in six counties were checked, with 27 percent cited for such infractions as selling alcohol or tobacco to minors.

The following are the results, with an estimated percentage of noncompliance in parentheses: Mackinac County (all in St. Ignace), five out of 11 businesses investigated were cited (45 percent); Chippewa County, 15 out of 39 places were cited (38 percent); Delta County, one out of four businesses cited (25 percent); Schoolcraft, one out of five businesses cited (20 percent); Marquette County, six out of 30 businesses cited (20 percent); Menominee County, one out of 18 businesses cited (five percent).

Mackinac and Schoolcraft county liquor establishments were selected by the Luce, Mackinac, Alger, Schoolcraft (LMAS) District Health Department.

In investigations similar to those made by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission, LMAS is required to conduct sting operations each year, which includes tobacco sales to minors, as part of its support for community health in the area, said Melanie MacDowell, a prevention specialist with LMAS. No sting operations were conducted in Luce and Alger counties this year because a prevention specialist was

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## Cedarville Students Collect Food for Needy Families

Cedarville High School Student Council members (from left) Dale Dunn, Kristen Duman, and Rebecca Bickham unload more than 30 grocery store bags of food and housekeeping supplies at Cedar Post Thrift Shop and Emergency Food Pantry in Cedarville Wednesday, November 1. The students were part of a group of about 17 Student Council members who collected the supplies in the organization's annual Trick-or-Treat for Charity in Clark Township Tuesday, October 31. Working from a wish list of necessary items provided by the food pantry, the students traveled around the area and collected goods to fill the shelves in time for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, when the pantry sees its biggest demand. (Photograph courtesy of Les Cheneaux Community Schools)

## County Commission Increases Food Pantry Funding

By Karen Gould

The St. Ignace Food Pantry will receive \$1,200 from Mackinac County in 2007, and the Curtis Baptist Food Pantry and the West Mackinac County Food Pantry in Engadine will each receive \$500. The St. Ignace contribution is \$700 more than last year, but equal to the 2003 and 2004 county funding levels.

Commissioners made the decision Thursday, November 9, following a request for increased funding from Pastor Tari Stage-Harvey of the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Ignace, who is treasurer of the organization, and Therese Mackin Oja of St. Ignace. Mrs. Oja was involved with the food pantry when it was first started at St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church in the 1970s.

"I'm very, very concerned for the people in our town and surrounding towns who come into St. Ignace for food and help," said Mrs. Oja.

St. Ignace clergy run the food pantry, said Pastor Stage-Harvey, which is reliant on donations of food and money. It is housed at 250 Ferry Lane, which is the same location as the Hope Chest resale shop. Unlike Cedarville Food Pantry, the resale shop does not support the St. Ignace pantry. Funds from the resale shop support Project Hope assistance, said Pastor Stage-Harvey.

"Your constituents in our area are badly in need," said Mrs. Oja. "I know that you have been giving the pantry money, but I hope that

you would give more money, especially since there are so many people here and the times have been terribly rough, and they are going to get rougher."

Pastor Harvey reported that this year the organization has spent almost \$6,000 in groceries and

served 1,104 people. In September, 145 people comprising 32 families were served, and in October, 179 people comprising 53 families received assistance. Demand was greatest last year in

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## Toy Drive Begins at St. Ignace

The St. Ignace holiday toy drive and Adopt-a-Family programs are now underway, with early December deadlines to ensure distribution to all families and children who need assistance this season. Toys and gifts should be donated by Sunday, December 10. Those who wish to adopt a family have the opportunity to provide

Christmas gifts and other necessities for households. Volunteers will be matched with families, and should also provide their gifts before December 10.

Last year, more than 150 children in Mackinac County received toys, owing to the generosity of

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## Program Starts for Santa's Elves

The Santa's Elves program in Clark Township is beginning, and descriptions of young people who need holiday gifts are now available at First National Bank, Les Cheneaux Branch in Cedarville. The bank is also planning a food drive to stock the shelves of the Cedar Post Emergency Food Pantry in Cedarville.

Santa's Elves is the Les Cheneaux Islands area holiday gift and food distribution program. The

program provides Christmas presents to approximately 110 needy children and food for 45 families during the Christmas holiday season.

Sponsors donate gifts by picking up description cards that include the age and gender of children who need gifts; they are now available at First National Bank. The deadline for returning gifts is Friday, December 15. Volunteers hope to

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## Schaeffer Brings Proposal to Drummond

Drummond Island Township Hall will host a community meeting Monday, November 20, at 7 p.m., to hear a proposal by Bob Schaeffer of St. Ignace for a mar-

itime project for businesses on the island.

The meeting is open to the public. Drummond Island Township Hall is on East Pine Road.

## Union Disputes Recent School Board Decisions at St. Ignace

By Paul Gingras

At its regular meeting Monday, November 14, the St. Ignace Board of Education received a positive report from Hill Schroderus & Co., LLP, the accounting firm that conducted the school's 2005/2006 audit, but the board received heavy criticism from the St. Ignace Education Association (SEA), which said the administration acted inappropriately Wednesday, October 18, when it voted to institute a three-month school calendar, a decision the union said the board was not entitled to make because the calendar is part of a package contract that is still being negotiated.

St. Ignace Area Schools emerged from the 2005/2006 school year with a general fund balance of \$405,495, \$66,418 more than the district ended with last year.

Some of the savings is because of higher attendance at games, which reduced the school subsidy of athletics, said business manager Kathy McLeod. The administration transfers money from the general fund help pay the salaries of the district's 31 coaches. Salaries amount to 90 percent of the transfer. The remaining 10 percent is used to pay for equipment, she added.

Less money than expected was drawn last year from the general fund to pay for diesel fuel to run the district's busses. The administration expected gas prices to remain around \$3 per gallon, but prices fell, instead. The district also saved on natural gas, which is used to heat the schools, because costs were less than expected.

Further, a mild winter last year produced relatively low snowfall and enabled the district to spend less than anticipated on snow plowing, Mrs. McLeod said.

The school spent less on classes and staffing, also. Four teachers who retired at the end of the 2004/2005 school year were not replaced, allowing the district to cut some classes and reorganize its remaining classes, a process which saved the school money but led to higher student counts in some courses, Mrs. McLeod said.

Last year, St. Ignace Area Schools did not offer French III or home economics, as it had the year before.

Another factor that led to the higher fund balance was the district's decision to pay its two counselors 75 percent of their normal salaries. This saved the district money during a time when the school had to borrow heavily from its fund balance. This year, owing to a better financial picture, their salaries have been increased to 100 percent of what they made in 2004/2005, Mrs. McLeod said.

Auditor Laurie Bamberg, who presented the report, said the fund balance looked better than last year's, but she added that it still does not achieve the recommendations of her firm. A district should have enough money in its fund balance to cover school expenses for about three months, she said. Right now, the St. Ignace Area School's fund balance could not run the school for a full month, she said.

On the other hand, the school's general fund has increased, and having a positive balance means the district can continue to employ all

of its current staff members, Mrs. McLeod said. Therefore, current class offerings and services for students will remain intact.

In other business, teachers and staff attended the meeting, and Lynwood Leightner, president of the St. Ignace Education Association (SEA), announced that the union has filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the school board. The complaint was made to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission.

Negotiations between the school board and the SEA are incomplete, and Mr. Leightner said the school board acted in bad faith at a special meeting Wednesday, October 18, when it approved a three-month calendar the union had not agreed to.

The calendar is part of the teacher's contract, Mr. Leightner explained. The administration and SEA had agreed upon a calendar in June 2006, but when contract negotiations continued through August, the union and administration agreed to use the calendar on a month-to-month basis until the contract is settled.

When the school board instituted a new three month calendar, however, it included at least 13 changes that the union had not agreed to. According to Nancy Cline of the Northern Michigan Education Association, the chief negotiator for the St. Ignace union, the school board changed the dates for professional development, changed some full days of instruction to half days, changed the last day of school, and changed parent-teacher conference dates. She wouldn't comment further.

Mr. Leightner said the board, St. Ignace Area Schools Superintendent Mike Springsteen, and Pete Everson, superintendent of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District, acted in bad faith last June by agreeing to a calendar they could not live with.

Mr. Leightner said the union disputes board action to approve or disapprove any part of the teachers contract before negotiations are complete.

Ultimately, the decision to institute the three-month calendar will have a negative impact on the community, he said. Now that it has been distributed, parents will make plans based on it, he said, but contract negotiations are likely to lead to changes in the schedule. The union formally requested that the board vote on the contract package only when it has been completed.

Development of the calendar has been stalled because it reflects working conditions that teachers may be negotiating, including the number of days school will be in session, the length of those days, the number of days the district allows for holiday vacations, and if holidays such as Easter will have days off at all, Superintendent Mike Springsteen told *The St. Ignace News* last October.

Negotiators from the SEA and the school administration will meet Wednesday, November 29. They will work to resolve their differences with help from a mediator provided by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Bureau of Employment Relations.