

20 Years of Friendly Competition Bring Mitchell, Mason to 100-Pint Mark on Same Day

By Ryan Schlehner

It took a free steak for Ron Mitchell and a free afternoon off from work for Cara Mason to entice them to donate blood for the first time decades ago, however, as they each reached the 100-pint mark Tuesday, December 19, it was their generous devotion to those who need blood that continued their commitment to donation.

Mr. Mitchell, who now lives in St. Ignace Township and is the chairman of the Mackinac Straits Hospital Board of Directors, was enlisted in the U.S. Air Force as a young man and was based in Lawry Air Force Base in Denver in 1955 when he heard free steaks were offered for donating blood.

Ms. Mason, now a St. Ignace resident who works at the Driftwood Motel, was working at AAA headquarters in Washington, D.C., in 1969 when she heard about getting an afternoon off from work if she donated blood.

Today, the American Red Cross, a nonprofit organization, is limited in providing such incentives, although it does sometimes hand out T-shirts and ski hats to donors. Both Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Mason said Tuesday that being able to help someone in need of a blood transfusion is incentive enough for them to

At right: Cara Mason (left) and Ron Mitchell donated their 100th unit of blood at an American Red Cross blood drive at the St. Ignace United Methodist Church Tuesday, December 19. The donating duo worked together at Gros Cap School for 20 years, and started the friendly competition in 1979. Pictured with them is Red Cross nurse Delma Casto of Petoskey.

donate.

"Personally," said Mr. Mitchell, "donating blood, I think, is something very important. It's something I can do that is so easy."

In 1979, Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Mason worked together at Gros Cap School in Moran Township. Mr. Mitchell was the superintendent when Ms. Mason was hired as the administrative assistant. By then, the two were regular donors and eventually went to blood drives together, forming a friendly competition to see who reached 100 units first. One unit of blood equals almost one pint.

This year, 20 years after starting the friendly competition, both reached the 100-pint mark at the same time, fittingly, each donating their 100th unit of blood at a Red Cross blood drive at the St. Ignace



United Methodist Church December 19.

As a Red Cross volunteer for more than 20 years, Ms. Mason coordinated as many as five blood drives a year in St. Ignace, providing homemade soup for the donors. She was awarded a Red Cross Certificate of Appreciation in

August for her efforts.

She continues to make soup for each of the six drives held each year in St. Ignace, although Mackinac Straits Hospital now coordinates the program, rotating locations at the Methodist Church and LaSalle High School.

Mr. Mitchell has missed only one

year since the duo started their competition, owing only to the medication he was taking at the time, which deferred him from donating blood.

Both said they are now working at donating another 100 pints.

"The next 100 will be hard to do," chuckled Mr. Mitchell, 70.

Ms. Mason remembers one time when she donated blood and the donation was immediately used to help a newborn baby.

"It didn't stay on the stand but one minute before it was taken," she said of the unit of blood. "It really makes you realize just how important giving blood is."

Patients need blood for cancer treatments, surgeries, and emergency care, regardless of the season, according to Red Cross. Blood shortages are typical during the winter holidays, when schedules, travel, and winter weather affect donor turnout, resulting in lower supplies and a bigger demand from increased road accidents.

For the Great Lakes region, 800 units of blood per day are needed,

said Biz Bauer, Red Cross senior donor recruitment representative for the northern Michigan area. The city of Detroit needs that amount per day, as well, she said.

For the northern Michigan area, between 40 to 110 units of blood are collected each day, said Ms. Bauer. Her agency tries to average 75 units per day.

Blood type O-positive is in critical demand by the Red Cross.

Red Cross collected 28 units of blood at Tuesday's blood drive, with 31 people offering to donate. She said the St. Ignace blood drives usually produce between 25 and 35 units per drive.

"Our biggest struggle is getting new people," said Ms. Bauer. "Holding it at the school is great because it gets so many new young people involved, thanks to the school's student council and National Honor Society."

Many people do not donate for a number of reasons, such as not having enough time and being afraid of needles. The number one reason Ms. Bauer hears from people as to why they did not donate is because no one asked them.

"We do advertise as much as we can, but word-of-mouth from a friend is the best way to get people involved," she said.

The following is a list of scheduled dates and locations for blood drives in the area in January:

January 9 - Les Cheneaux Community Center in Cedarville, noon to 5:45 p.m.

January 12 - Kinross Correctional Facility Training Center in Kincheloe, 10 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

January 17 - Faith Lutheran Church, 1600 Park Street in Sault Ste. Marie, noon to 5:45 p.m.

Eligible donors must be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds, and be in good general health.

To learn more about donating blood, call (800) 448-5433 or go online to www.givelife.org

3 Considered for Emergency Services Post

Three candidates remain in the running for the Mackinac County Emergency Services coordinator position. The Mackinac County Board of Commissioners narrowed the field from 13 during interviews Tuesday, December 19.

Ron Wolford of Pellston, Sally Willis of Cedarville, and Matt Bowlby of St. Ignace will be interviewed one more time Friday, December 29, before commissioners make their final decision on the \$13-an-hour, 30-hours-a-week position.

The ES coordinator is responsible for planning and training for potential county disasters and emergencies and works with area road agencies, law enforcement, fire departments, medical services, utility companies, and schools.

Commissioners received 14 applications, and one person withdrew from consideration owing to salary concerns.

Miki Della-Moretta resigned from the position in November and Bryce Tracy, who is the county's 9-1-1 coordinator, has been filling in until a replacement is hired. Mr. Tracy and Sheriff Scott Strait sat in on the interviews.

Body Identified as Pickford Man

A body found by a prison work crew in a wooded area of Bruce Township near Sault Ste. Marie December 20 has been identified as that of Matthew Scott Wendt, 20, of Pickford, who was reported missing 10 years ago.

Mr. Wendt was reported missing in February 1996 and was last seen walking northbound to Sault Ste. Marie.

Laboratory investigations are underway to determine whether his death involved foul play, Michigan State Police reported December 21.

Unemployment Claims Hours Set

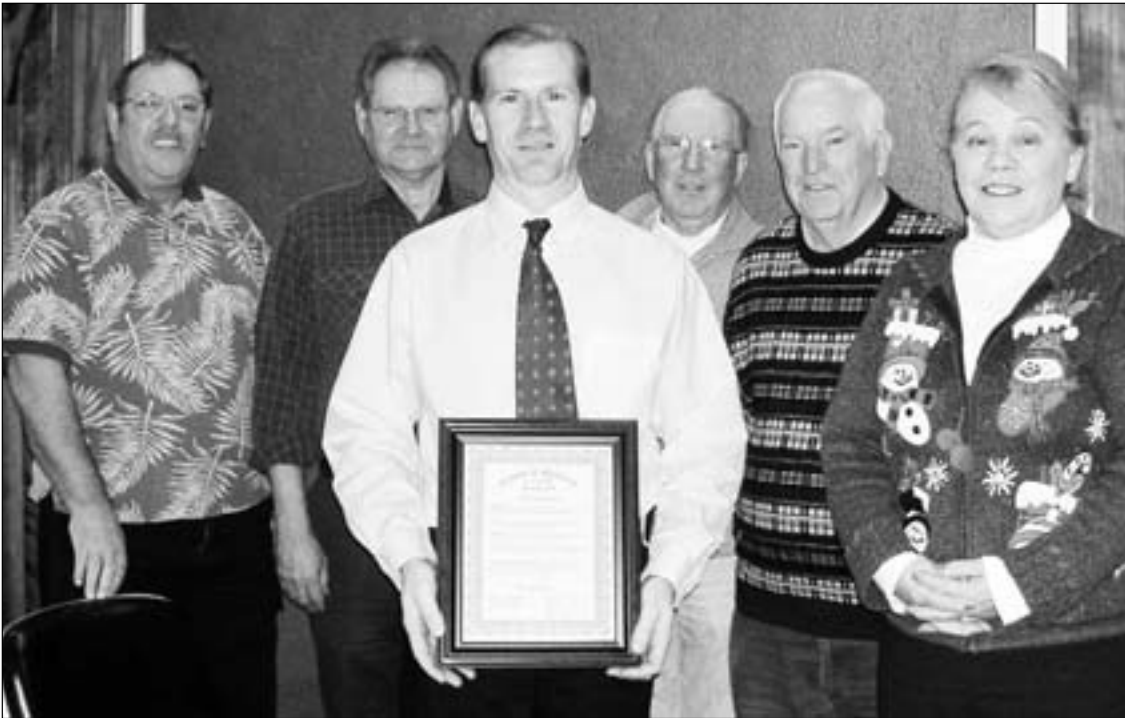
Michigan's Unemployment Insurance Agency will make its toll-free phone lines available for three days during the week of Christmas and three days during the week of New Year's Day to take unemployment claims.

The phone line will be open Wednesday, December 27, through Friday, December 29, and Wednesday, January 3, through Friday, January 5, the agency announced December 21. Claims will be accepted for unemployment benefits from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on those dates at (866) 500-0017.

Lower call volume and shorter waiting periods are anticipated after 1 p.m.

The Internet system for taking claims will continue its normal hours of operation, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Mondays through Saturdays, at www.michigan.gov/uia.

Individuals Recognized for Service to County



Contributions made to the county were recognized by commissioners during their Thursday, December 14, meeting with resolutions given to those leaving their positions. Recognized were county commissioners Joe Durm and Jim Farero, Judge Tom North, Prosecutor Clayton Graham, and the late Clyde "Bo" Bradford, for his service on the Board of Public Works. Pictured are (front) Clayton Graham; (back, from left) county commissioners Larry Leveille, Carl Frazier, Joe Durm, Jim Farero, and Dawn Nelson.

Mackinac Trail Reconstruction Moving Forward Again

Road Work To Begin at North End of Project

By Karen Gould

Plans to reconstruct Mackinac Trail from the county line south are moving forward, four years after they were proposed and following one diversion that sent the work to the southern end of the road.

The St. Ignace Township Board, at its Thursday, December 14, meeting, directed Township Clerk Donna Harju to send a letter of support for the project to the Mackinac County Road Commission. Although some township residents would have preferred the project be taken up at the south end of Mackinac Trail, township board members reached a consensus that the risks of losing the latest round of federal funds for the project would be too great if they asked the road commission to reconsider its plans and begin construction where it ended in 2004, when funds ran out.

The Road Commission, which addressed the issue five days later at its Tuesday, December 19, meeting, noted the township's letter and submitted the reconstruction plans to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), which will seek bids in March for the Mackinac Trail project.

"This commission has and still does take the township's opinion in high regard," said Road Commission Chairman Lester Livermore. "It's essential that we

work with them and if the township feels we should start at the north end, we should start at the north end."

Not all residents who attended the township meeting Thursday favored the township board's move.

Originally slated to begin in 2003 at the county line, a switch in plans called for the road work to begin at the M-123 interchange and move north. The change caused a delay and work began in 2004. Funding of approximately \$1.7 million covered road reconstruction work from M-123 to 800 feet north of

the Carp River Campground Road. That left less than 10 miles of Mackinac Trail in Mackinac County unfinished.

Now, new funding of \$3.2 million coming from the Federal Forest Highway Funds is earmarked for the project and sent to MDOT. The money is expected to cover approximately five to six miles of reconstruction work and run from the county line to approximately the snowmobile trail. The County Road Commission had to compete with projects all across the county to get the federal dollars for the project.

This would leave approximately a four-mile middle section of the road unfinished.

The township board weighed the logic of instead continuing the reconstruction work from where it

left off at the south end near the Carp River Campground Road, where the project would head north until the new funds run out. This would leave the unfinished section approximately four miles from the county line and create no mid-section gap.

Township resident Joan Theut, who attended Thursday's meeting, supported this option. She said most of her trips are on Mackinac Trail to St. Ignace and not to Sault Ste. Marie. She said the road was "heavily traveled" and questioned why the entire road was not completed.

"Why can't they [road commission] borrow the money - other counties do that - and make payments on it?" she asked the township board.

Board members expressed their concern that with federal funding promised for the project to begin at the north end, it may be lost if they changed the direction of the project and headed north from the campground road.

Township Supervisor Dale Nelson said he recently had driven the road.

"I felt portions of the north end were the worst parts, but then the road was bad all the way," he said. "Our hopes and dreams were that the whole second half would be completed this time."

Trustee Steven Campbell agreed that the north end was the worst section of the road.

"We owe it to those people who've been driving this to get it done," he said. "We'd like to do the whole thing, but we can't."

Mackinac Trail resident David Aho read a letter he had written to the board regarding the project, arguing that the "northern-most

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Tower May Bring Wireless Internet to Clark Township

By Amy Polk

Cedarville will be the site of a new cellular telephone tower, if Florida-based SBA Communications clears all hurdles to building it in Clark Township. The tower will improve wireless telephone service for CellularOne customers and could also host CS Connect, a new wireless Internet service provider.

Representatives from the tower company, Cellere, told the Clark Township board Thursday night, December 21, that it is negotiating a lease with property owners between State Avenue and M-134 in Cedarville. SBA Communications plans to build a 300-foot-tall guide tower there, said Papillion Erreca of Cellere, and the tower's first tenant will be Dobson Communications Corporation of Minnesota, the parent company of CellularOne. Dan Burrows, a Cedarville resident planning to launch CS Connect,

has also expressed interest in renting space on the tower to provide high-speed, wireless Internet service to the area. The tower would be an anchor site for CS Connect, Mr. Erreca said, and other, smaller towers will be erected at other service sites around the area.

SBA's tower will have space for up to five tenants, Mr. Erreca said, and the cellular telephone broadcast range is about five miles in all directions. He said other cellular service providers would be able to use the tower.

Resident Alan Huff asked whether the tower could be erected near the township's industrial park to improve the likelihood of providing high-speed Internet to the park to attract new business there. Since the park is next to the airport, Mr. Erreca said it is difficult to get Federal Aviation Administration approval for

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Kelly Plank Designs Snowsfest Button



Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Association Coordinator Bud Lowers (left) presented Les Cheneaux Elementary School student Kelly Plank with an award when her drawing was chosen as the 2007 Snowsfest button design. Her depiction of dog sledding, one of the events offered in past years to Snowsfest spectators, will be on entry buttons being made for the event. Snowsfest will be Friday, February 16, through Sunday, February 18.