

SELLING FOR A CAUSE



PRESS PHOTO/HOLLYN JOHNSON

From left, Clara Bernal and Alexia DeLange, students from Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center's fourth- and fifth-grade class, sell stuffed animals, Tootsie Roll suckers and gum in their school store called "Discover Cover" during school store hours Wednesday afternoon. The students came up with the school store project as a way to help others. Each school store donates profits back to the school or to a student-chosen organization. **For more on this story, check mlive.com/grand-rapids.**

Victim's sister gets her wish

Police charge alleged drunken driver in fatal May 10 highway crash

BY NATE REENS
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRANDVILLE — At times, Leslie Kidd's patience began to wane, knowing the man who allegedly caused a drunken-driving crash that killed her younger sister was walking free after the May 10 collision.

But Kidd's faith in police never wavered. She believed Grandville investigators eventually would charge Scott Ryan Sikkema for driving his truck the wrong way on I-196 and slamming into Meredith O'Brien's car.

That confidence was rewarded Thursday as Sikkema, 29, was charged with operating under the influence causing death. He was arrested,



Scott Ryan Sikkema

jailed and was expected to appear for arraignment in 59th District Court today on the 15-year felony offense. "It's been very difficult for us to deal with Meredith's loss and it seemed like there was never going to be an end to it," Kidd said Thursday. "It's a relief that he's in jail."

Police told Kidd that Sikkema was legally intoxicated at the time of the 5:30 a.m. crash.

The suspect was arrested at the scene on the suspicion of drunken driving. However, he was released the next day for further investigation.

Authorities explained the process and the investigation to O'Brien's family, building a rapport that let them focus on overcoming the 22-year-old Grand Valley State University student's death and not the criminal probe.

"It's going to be a hard year because she was literally one of those perfect people," said Kidd, 25. "Our family, this world, has suffered a great loss."

O'Brien was studying non-profit business administration at Grand Valley and volunteered at local missions. She was headed to work at Westshore Mall in Holland on the morning of the crash.

Sikkema, of Zeeland, was driving home after a night out with friends, authorities said. His truck struck the 22-year-old's car head-on near the Kent and Ottawa county line.

Records show Sikkema had no alcohol-related offenses on his driving history and no points on his license. The crash suspect was featured in a Press story in November when he moved into an independent living center. He was dealing with bipolar disorder and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, he said.

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Cat attacker faces abuse charges

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

MONTCALM COUNTY — A Lakeview man who prosecutors say tried to behead a cat with a sword is now facing an animal abuse charge.

Chad Gregory, 31, of Lakeview, allegedly tried to kill the cat May 30 at his home.

"Someone from where he lives called it in and said the

guy was going after the cat," Montcalm County Prosecutor Andrea Krause said.

Gregory allegedly chased the cat around the house with the weapon, but was unsuccessful in killing it, Krause said.

The cat was cut on an ear, but otherwise is "going to be fine," Krause said.

A judge set a \$2,000 bond

for Gregory, who is charged with attempted killing or torturing an animal, a two-year offense.

His lawyer Monday sought judicial permission for a psychiatric exam to see if Gregory is competent to stand trial. The exam may take several weeks to complete.

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Boy critically injured after car hits buggy

BY CASSIE FOSS
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

MORLEY — A 6-year-old boy whom neighbors described as a "little sweetheart with a big smile" was critically injured after a car hit his family's horse-drawn buggy, causing him to fall onto the pavement.

Samuel Brenneman, known as "Sammy," was airlifted to Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids after the 3 p.m. Wednesday collision.

State troopers in Reed City said the Morley boy was one of four family members in the Amish buggy when a Big Rapids man driving a Saturn north on 155th Avenue struck the buggy from behind, north of Five Mile Road.

Police did not release the Saturn driver's name.

Neighbor and family friend Muriel Gundy said the boy was riding with his mother, Edna Brenneman, who was driving the buggy, his brother Elmer Brenneman, 8, and his sister Sadie Brenneman, 2. They had minor injuries, she said.

"Elmer had a big knot on

his head and a black eye this morning," said Gundy, who arrived at the scene of the accident before Sammy was airlifted to the hospital. "The children all seemed to be doing OK, except one of them did say they wanted to go to church and pray for their brother, but can't because their wagon is broken."

The car and the buggy were headed north when the car struck the buggy and knocked off a rear wheel, police said.

There were other Amish buggy accidents in recent years. In October 2006 in Fremont, an 11-year-old Amish girl was killed in a hit-and-run crash while riding in a buggy with her family.

Gundy said Sammy is one of nine Brenneman children, ranging in age from a toddler to 13. The family farms and raises cattle, turkey and chickens. Edna Brenneman told Gundy she and the children were headed up the road to pick up some items for their garden.

"They are a real nice family," Gundy said. "We all help each other out. They had just

put in a big vegetable garden and the kids were helping out."

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Car dealer gets 90 days in jail

Women argue
AAA Auto Sales owner
deserved more discipline

BY BARTON DEITERS
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRAND RAPIDS — A used car dealer who admitted to gross indecency was ordered Thursday to spend 90 days in the Kent County Jail, to undergo psychiatric and marriage counseling, and to agree never again to be alone with a female employee or customer.

Alan Anderson, the owner of AAA Auto Sales, 5740 S. Division Ave., faced at least three charges of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct in Kent and Allegan counties. He worked out an agreement with the Kent County Prosecutor's Office to

plead to gross indecency and the other charges would be dropped.

"It was the appropriate sentence on the appropriate charge," said Frank Stanley, Anderson's attorney.

Anderson, 55, admitted he was on U.S. 131 with a female employee whom he was fondling but said the sexual conduct was consensual.

But a group of women who were at Kent County Circuit Court on Thursday to watch the sentencing was not happy.

"He got away with murder," said a woman in her 20s who worked for AAA for a few weeks in 2006 until she said Anderson tried to get her to touch him as they drove. When she refused, the woman said Anderson touched himself as she sat in the next seat.

She related her allegations during a hearing in Kentwood District Court in February, then was accused by Stanley of making up her charges to

get revenge because Anderson, who had no criminal record, sold her a car she considered a lemon.

"I'm disappointed," she said outside the courtroom. "How his lawyer got him off, I'll never know."

She and other women who made allegations against Anderson said they do not believe he will stop. The female listed as the victim in the gross indecency case did not show up for the sentencing, and the other women were not part of that case, so Judge Dennis Leiber did not allow them to address the court.

But Stanley said the reason his client did not go to trial for the other allegations is the proof simply was not there.

"People think they can besmirch someone's reputation and get away with it," Stanley said. "These women were shown to be lying."

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Ponzi suspect expected to plea

BY JOHN TUNISON
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRAND RAPIDS — Michael Vorce, accused of fraudulently bilking \$27 million in loans from banks and facing multiple federal charges, is expected to enter a plea within two weeks.

Vorce, 32, of Alpine Township, was in Grand Rapids' federal court Thursday for an arraignment on bank fraud charges out of Wisconsin and misdemeanor charges for failure to report income of \$11.3

million in 2006 and 2007.

Vorce, once a prominent Grand Rapids boat broker, also faces a bevy of West Michigan federal charges for allegedly getting loans for yachts that did not exist.

Wearing an orange jail uniform, he said little in court at Thursday's brief hearing. U.S. Assistant Attorney Tim Verhey said Vorce is expected to enter a plea to resolve all the cases on June 18, but he did not divulge details of the pending plea agreement.

Vorce's charges in Wisconsin, which have since been transferred here, involve allegedly using the identity of a Milwaukee lawyer to obtain a \$391,000 yacht loan.

Authorities said he used the money to fund a lavish lifestyle that included a Miami condo, an Alpine Township mansion, expensive vehicles and big-screen televisions.

He has been in jail since August, when he was arrested in Chicago.

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Former GM, beauty salon worker 'would help anybody'

BY JACOB CARPENTER
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

ROCKFORD — Although she loved to travel the country, Pauline Squires always returned to Rockford.

Squires was two miles from her home Wednesday evening when police say she ran a stop sign at 13 Mile Road and Tefft Avenue NE and was killed after colliding with an SUV. She was 87.

The driver of the SUV, John Robinette, 39, of Plainfield Township, was recovering Thursday from broken ribs suffered during the crash. Squires attended Rockford High School in the late 1930s and graduated a year earlier than her classmates.

"Her grades were just that good," said Squires' son, Robert Squires Jr.

She met Robert Squires, a Courtland Township native, and moved across the country with him as he toured with the Army. Squires went to Tennessee, California and Texas, where she and Robert were married, before he was deployed to the Philippines.

"She used to wait tables in California just to scrounge together enough money to buy me milk," Robert Squires Jr. said.

While her husband was overseas during World War II, Squires went to work in Wolverine World Wide and

General Motors Corp. factories.

After the war, Squires resided in Kent County, working at three beauty salons. She and her husband raised two children, Robert Jr. and Brenda, before Robert Sr. retired from Michigan Wheel Corp. in 1981.

"She would help anybody," Robert Squires III said. "If somebody needed something and she had it, she was going to find a way to make sure she gave it to you."

Squires was preceded in death by her husband, who died last July.

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CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

Public Hearing Notice
Downtown Improvement District
Special Assessment #8666

The City Commission of the City of Grand Rapids has scheduled a public hearing on a multi-year necessity for special assessment, in accordance with Michigan Public Act 120 of 1961, entitled the Principal Shopping District, as amended, to support enhanced services in the downtown area. The hearing will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 16, 2009, at Dickinson Elementary School, 448 Dickinson Street SE.

The City Manager and the Downtown Improvement District Board have presented a report to the City Commission containing the following information: a program summary, a map of the proposed special assessment district, description of proposed service enhancements, proposed budget and schedule. The Downtown Improvement District Board has recommended the approval of a multi-year necessity for special assessment, beginning July 1, 2009 and ending June 30, 2012.

Information related to this proposal is available for public examination during business hours at the Office of the City Clerk, 2nd Floor, 300 Monroe Avenue NW, or at the Downtown Development Authority, 9th Floor, 300 Monroe Avenue NW, until the public hearing or any adjourned session thereof is complete. If you have additional questions, you may contact the Downtown Improvement District at 616-456-3163 or egratt@grcity.us.

We urge all interested citizens to attend the hearing on June 16, 2009.

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