

FEBRUARY/NEWS

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the statewide average price of gas has risen a total of 18.2 cents.

FEB. 13

Prelim is adjourned

TRAVERSE CITY — A preliminary hearing for one of two Traverse City St. Francis students charged in connection with a brawl with Traverse City Central students was adjourned Wednesday, after a teen believed to have been injured in the incident failed to show up in court.

"He's not here in the court house," assistant prosecutor Robert Cooney told District Judge Michael Haley, referring to Central student Michael Boudrie, 16, who police say suffered a broken jaw in the Oct. 27 incident. "We've got the city police looking. They've sent a car out to his house."

Prosecutor Dennis LaBelle said later that Boudrie may have believed the hearing was canceled because he had received notice that the hearing had been adjourned for one of the defendants.

John R. Bourdon, 18, of Elk Rapids, faces charges of felonious assault, which carries up to four years in prison, and carrying a dangerous weapon with unlawful intent, a five-year felony.

Richard Schilling, 18, of Traverse City, faces a charge of carrying a dangerous weapon with unlawful intent.

FEB. 14

North Country reports loss

TRAVERSE CITY — The parent company of North Country Bank and Trust said its losses for the first nine months of 2002 were about 21 percent greater than earlier reported, though a company spokesman says recent accounting changes and other measures should bring a return to profitability.

Traverse City-based North Country Financial Corp. said its losses for the first nine months of 2002 reached \$8.6 million, according to a Jan. 9 filing with the federal

Security and Exchange Commission. In November, the company reported a loss of \$7 million for the same period.

The loss compares with a profit of \$5.1 million for the first nine months of the previous year.

Most of the 2002 loss occurred in the third quarter. According to the January filing, the company lost nearly \$8.5 million, up from \$7 million reported to the SEC in November.

FEB. 14

Developer files fourth suit

PETOSKEY — A downstate developer has again gone to court over plans to create a "big-box" retail and housing development south of the Wal-Mart plaza in Emmet County's Bear Creek Township.

Strathmore Development Co. of East Lansing filed suit in U.S. District Court earlier this month. It is its fourth lawsuit against the township over the proposed development.

The developer claims Bear Creek Township officials intentionally concealed a 1995 letter and meeting minutes. Those documents, the developer contends, would have shown the retail portion of their project was proper for where it was proposed.

Township attorney Joel Wurster denied the allegation.

FEB. 15

Tree project honored

ST. LOUIS — The National Council of State Garden Clubs has announced that it is presenting its 2003 Award of Excellence to Manistee County tree farmers David and Jared Milarch and their Champion Tree Project.

"We had no idea how big an outfit this was," said Milarch, who was contacted by the group last month and invited to attend its May 19 convention in Biloxi, Miss., to receive the award. "And it's not just about flowers and vegetables."

With some 264,440 members

from 8,488 clubs in the United States and other countries, the council — known less formally as the National Garden Clubs — is the largest organized group of gardeners in the world.

FEB. 16

Pay hike is weighed

PETOSKEY — Now at more than three months in length, the registered nurse walkout at Northern Michigan Hospital is believed to be the longest nurse strike in Michigan history — and is inching closer to the national record.

The strike, which commenced when 268 of the hospital's 440 nurses walked off Nov. 14, is at 95 days as of today. That is well over what is believed to be the longest previous nurses strike in Michigan — a nine-week labor stoppage at McLaren Hospital in Flint that ended

in January 2001.

The purported longest nurse strike in U.S. history was 151 days — five months — at a community hospital in Nyack, N.Y., in 2000.

Northern Michigan Hospital administrators are now considering providing the economic portion of their late-December "final offer" to nurses who did not strike — raising the ire of officials for Teamsters Local 406, the union representing the striking nurses.

FEB. 16

Theology major wants aid

TRAVERSE CITY — Teresa Becker's faith in her study of theology never wavered, even when she learned that declaring it as her college major would mean the loss of a \$1,850 scholarship.

The Traverse City resident, a junior at Ave Maria College in Ypsilanti, declared theolo-

gy as her major last spring. By summer she was notified that she would lose her yearly award from Michigan's Competitive Scholarship Program, which rewards hard-working high school students with money to pay for their higher education.

Becker, 20, believes revoking the scholarship was not only unfortunate and unfair but also unconstitutional.

With help from the Thomas More Law Center of Ann Arbor, Becker filed a lawsuit Jan. 31 against state officials in charge of the scholarship program, including Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

According to Michigan law, students majoring in theology, divinity or religious education are ineligible for the competitive scholarships. The law governing the program dates to 1964, but the provision expressly excluded

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