

DECEMBER/NEWS

DEC. 1**Educating public on HIV**

TRAVERSE CITY — Sandy is not gay. She has never been an intravenous drug user.

She has never been a prostitute. But she is HIV positive.

"Somewhere along the line I was careless," said the a 37-year-old who lives outside of Traverse City. "I don't know how I got it, but it doesn't matter how I got it, it matters that I got it and I'm getting treatment for it."

Sandy, who asked that her last name not be used, is among a growing number of people who live in northern Michigan who are HIV positive.

Fortunately, Sandy, who tested positive in 1995, knows her status, said clinical nurse specialist Mary Dillinger.

That means she gets treatment that can prevent her from developing AIDS.

It also means she knows not to spread the disease to others.

In fact, Sandy's husband of 10 years does not have HIV.

"He gets tested every six months," Sandy said. "We're really cautious."

Today, which is World's AIDS Day, Sandy plans to speak to students at Traverse City Central High School about the dangers of HIV.

DEC. 2**Downtown facelift**

GRAYLING — Grayling area officials are holding a forum next month to discuss sprucing up downtown.

The forum will be held with local planners from 5:30 to 10 p.m. on Jan. 8 at the Crawford County Building.

The county and the City of Grayling received a \$25,000 grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corp. and both municipalities have matched the funds with \$12,500 each — for a total of \$50,000.

Officials want to hear from residents about their ideas for downtown, beautification projects and parking issues. City Manager Allen Lowe said.

DEC. 3**Some misuse program**

BEULAH — Drop-off recycling sites in Benzie County have been trashed with dirty diapers and other unacceptable waste.

Residents who misuse the sites could put the entire program in jeopardy, county officials said.

Households in Almira, Platte, Inland, Homestead, Lake, Benzonia, Blaine, Joyfield and Colfax townships and the villages of Lake Ann, Honor, Benzonia and Beulah pay \$17 a year in taxes, which raises about \$131,000, to fund the 2-year-old program.

Participants using drop-off sites in Beulah, Honor and Almira and Colfax townships kept more than 550 tons of paper, metal, glass and plastic out of landfills this year, county recycling coordinator Kriste Walsh said.

Although most users follow the rules, there have been problems in recent weeks.

DEC. 5**Ostrander gets life**

GRAND RAPIDS — A Cadillac man who faced a possible death sentence after being convicted of murder in a federal court was instead sentenced Thursday to life in prison.

Robert Norman Ostrander, 30, will spend the rest of his life behind bars without any possibility of being paroled.

Chief Judge Robert Holmes Bell of U.S. District Court presided over Ostrander's trial and sentencing hearing. The hearing started Tuesday and ended with Ostrander's sentencing late Thursday afternoon.

The same jury of eight women and four men that convicted Ostrander on Nov. 20 chose not to condemn him to death.

DEC. 6**Judge mum at deadline**

TRAVERSE CITY — State Sen. Michelle McManus said Friday she will explore her options after a deadline

passed without a word from Judge Thomas Gilbert to lawmakers about his marijuana use.

"He's not answering questions," said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, who along with state Rep. Ken Bradstreet, R-Gaylord, and state Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt, had demanded Gilbert by Thursday give more details about his marijuana use.

Gilbert was suspended from the 86th District Court after he admitted he smoked marijuana at a rock concert last year.

McManus said earlier that she might seek to have Gilbert removed from the bench if he didn't answer questions or gave unsatisfactory answers to lawmakers. On Friday, she said she was not sure what she would do.

Gilbert, who has said he has been sober since he attended rehab last year, said Tuesday he would not answer the lawmakers' questions about his drug use.

DEC. 7**Hunters: Deer season bad**

LAKE LEELANAU — While the DNR's firearms deer season harvest estimate claims that hunters took approximately 277,000 deer during the two-week season — just seven percent fewer than last year — area hunters claim that in reality it was much worse.

According to Rodney Clute, the state's deer specialist, abnormally warm, wet weather during the first few days of the season, when most hunters traditionally take to the woods, may have been responsible for marginal hunting conditions.

DECEMBER 9**Union still favored**

PETOSKEY — A majority of nurses at Northern Michigan Hospital wants to stay with the Teamsters, according to a count Monday of all votes in last month's election.

The tally was 288-211 in favor of continuing with the Teamsters. The Nov. 13 vote totals are not official until certified by the National Labor Relations Board.

Teamsters Local 406 attorney Ted Iorio said the result was a far wider margin of victory than the union had when first installed as the nurses' bargaining agent in October 2001.

That vote total was 213-185.

But hospital spokesman Thomas Spencer said the vote outcome does not change management's stance.

Hospital officials have urged the Teamsters to end the strike by accepting what they called their "last, best and final offer," made a year ago.

Hospital management had filed objections earlier alleging that the election had been improperly conducted.

An NLRB hearing on those objections is set for Thursday in Petoskey.

A final ballot count was stalled for more than three weeks after 165 nurses' ballots were contested — 136 by hospital management or working nurse Laura Hart, who petitioned for the Nov. 13 election to remove the Teamsters.

DEC. 9**Stronger strain of flu hits**

TRAVERSE CITY — Family members visiting residents in one Benzie County nursing home are being told to call first — up to 40 percent of the home's residents have influenza.

Keith Miller, administrator at The Maples Benzie County Medical Care Facility, said 35 to 40 percent of the 59 residents have the flu.

He said 99 percent of the residents received a flu vaccine but are more susceptible to the virus because of their frail health.

"We aren't quarantined, we are advising resident family members to call and find out how they are," Miller said.

Area health officials said this year's flu, which alarmed some after several children in Colorado died from the virus, began earlier and is a stronger strain than most years.

Dr. David Martin, an infectious disease doctor at Munson Medical Center in Traverse City, said the emer-

gency room reported about 15 cases of the Fujian flu strain daily over the weekend.

DEC. 10**Would-be robber thwarted**

LELAND — The owners of a home on South Lake Shore Drive in Lake Leelanau woke up Tuesday to find a stranger in their midst.

But the would-be robber fled the house as soon as he was discovered, Leelanau County Sheriff's deputies say, and drove away in an unknown vehicle.

Deputies say another home in the area also was broken into last month.

DEC. 11**1,400 without power**

ARCADIA — About 1,400 Consumers Energy customers in Manistee and Benzie counties lost power Wednesday evening.

A Consumers spokesman said crews were not able to find the cause by 8:30 p.m., but suspected a downed power line somewhere between the Arcadia substation and Onekama.

No estimate was available on when power might be restored, but the spokesman said it could be as early as midnight if it was caused by a downed wire.

DEC. 12**Student killed in hit, run**

ALANSON — An Alanson teenager described as a hard-working and well-liked student was killed Wednesday in a hit-and-run crash in Emmet County's Littlefield Township.

Lindsey Marie Marek, 16, the driver and sole occupant of her car, was pronounced dead at the scene, Emmet Sheriff Peter Wallin said.

A 39-year-old Charlevoix man has been arrested on a charge of leaving the scene of a fatal traffic accident and is in the Emmet County Jail. His name has not been released pending his arraignment. The felony charge carries a maximum penalty of up to 15 years