



PISTONS EVEN SERIES

DETROIT GRABS HOME-COURT ADVANTAGE, 1D

The Detroit News

Friday, May 23, 2008

detnews.com

Metro Final

ONLINE EXTRAS

- Win tickets, watch videos, view photos
- Join the Wings Talk forum
- CyberQuiz: What do you know about penguins?

It's all at detnews.com/wings

detnews.com



When octopi fly

By FRANCIS X. DONNELLY
The Detroit News

DETROIT — The seats are full and the octopi will fly.

With the Wings once again happily ensconced in the Stanley Cup finals, beginning Saturday, hockey traditions and mania are about to pervade Hockeytown.

And no tradition is more manic than octopus-tossing. Fans sneak them into the Joe, usually under their clothes.

Slimy, sure. Weird, you bet. But it's a

Wings custom that goes back a half-century, when two brothers running a local fish market flung an eight-armed creature onto the ice for good luck. "They get all the credit for it or the blame," said building manager Al Sobotka.

Back then, a team had to win eight playoff games to attain the championship. Now it's 16 games. But God hasn't created a 16-arm being, with the possible exception of sainted goalie Chris Osgood.

The mollusk has become a team mascot. But rival Pittsburgh fans are fighting back — a fish market there won't sell

octopi to Wings fans.

As the tender of this octopus garden, Sobotka is responsible for retrieving the \$40 critters. He works fans into even more of a lather by swinging them over his head.

The NHL asked him to stop twirling them because it sprays "matter" onto the ice. So now he limits his swinging to the concourse.

VACCINE, AUTISM LINK EXPLORED



Ricardo Thomas / The Detroit News

Heidi Scheer plays with her children Ella, left, Carson and Gannon, who has autism. Scheer believes a vaccine led to the disease.

Fears that shots may cause condition push parents to action

By JENNIFER CHAMBERS
The Detroit News

COMMERCE TOWNSHIP — Heidi and Doug Scheer's decision to stop vaccinating their three children — ages 4, 7, and 8 — has been met with alarm and skepticism by outsiders.

But the couple said their choice to refuse additional childhood immunizations recommended by the U.S. government for their family has also brought them something else: a sense of relief and, unexpectedly, hope.

The Scheers, like a small but growing number of American families, believe vaccines may have triggered autism in their 7-year-old son, Gannon, and that avoiding future shots could spare their

other children the same fate.

"There has been a definite shift in people's reactions," said Heidi Scheer, 41. "Everyone thought we were nuts. Now they say they agree, and it's not a closed door. People are becoming more aware of the dangers."

The issue of whether childhood vaccinations are linked to autism has sparked a fierce national debate between parents of autistic children who offer endless anecdotal evidence and the scientific and medical communities that say current data does not support a connection.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 1

Please see Autism, Page 9A

Signs of autism

Autism is treatable. Children do not "outgrow" autism, but studies show that early diagnosis and intervention lead to significantly improved outcomes.

Here are some signs to look for in the children in your life:

- Lack of or delay in spoken language
- Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
- Little or no eye contact
- Lack of interest in peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play
- Persistent fixation on parts of objects

Source: Autism Society of America

Industry's structural shift hits Ford hard

■ Consumer move to smaller vehicles may mean more cuts, internal changes for ailing Detroit automakers.

By BRYCE G. HOFFMAN
The Detroit News

The warning flag Ford Motor Co. sent up Thursday is just the latest sign of an auto industry in trouble, raising questions about

DARK PATH
Howes: Area's other auto firms may not be far behind Ford. 1C

which automaker will be next to respond to severe economic headwinds with dramatic plans to cut

factory output and jobs. Ford's announcement that it will slash production of trucks and SUVs, eliminate more jobs and miss its profitability target in 2009 reinforces the challenges Detroit's Big Three face as rising fuel prices and a weak economy drive fundamental change in consumers' buying tastes.

It is a blow to an already struggling U.S. auto industry that has restructured significantly in the past few years, closing plants and laying off thousands of workers, and now faces perhaps its most challenging time since the 1970s oil embargo forced a massive restructuring on the industry.

Ford's news underscored how quickly industry conditions are changing, coming a month after the automaker surprised Wall Street with a \$100 million first-quarter profit and reassurance from CEO Alan Mulally that Ford would meet its 2009 profitability promise.

Mulally said Thursday that what began as a shift in consumer demand away from big pickups and SUVs to smaller, more fuel-effi-

Please see Ford, Page 6A

AMERICAN AXLE STRIKE

Workers ratify contract

UAW members lament terms but vote to end 87-day walkout

STORY, 1C



Oakland weighs 4-day work week

■ County exec Patterson proposes longer days to save government workers gas money and time.

development services. "I think anything an employer can do to help with savings in that area is a positive thing."

Hunter and his fellow Oakland

By DELORES FLYNN
The Detroit News

PONTIAC — Dan Hunter shells out about \$75 to fill up his Dodge Caravan and spends 35 minutes driving each way to work daily.

The 50-mile round trip from Holly to Pontiac often finds him in traffic so heavy that it takes several cycles of a traffic signal to get through a single intersection.

"Things can get pretty busy during rush hour, but the biggest problem is the cost of fuel," said Hunter, director of Oakland County planning and economic

County workers could get some relief at the gas pump if a plan announced Thursday by County Exec-

utive L. Brooks Patterson becomes reality. Patterson plans to ask the county Board of Commissioners to approve a four-day, 40-hour work week for Oakland government employees to help ease the burden of escalating gas prices.

Please see Oakland, Page 6A

Please see Oakland, Page 6A



Contact us
Delivery questions: 800-395-3300
News tip hotline: 313-222-6777
newstips@detnews.com
Classified: 800-926-8237

MORE ONLINE
Click on Food to find ideas and recipes for weekend meals and parties.
detnews.com



THIS WEEKEND
■ Fun events to keep Metro Detroiters busy. 1B
■ Celebrate veterans at local parades, services. 1E

Sections	Index
Metro B	Comics 2-3E
Business C	Deaths 4B
Sports D	Editorials 10A
My Friday E	Horoscope 2E
My Movies F	Lottery 2A
Classifieds G	Movies 5F
	Puzzles 7G
	TV 2E
	Weather 2A

MediaNews Group 134th year, No. 236 ©The Detroit News
Printed in USA