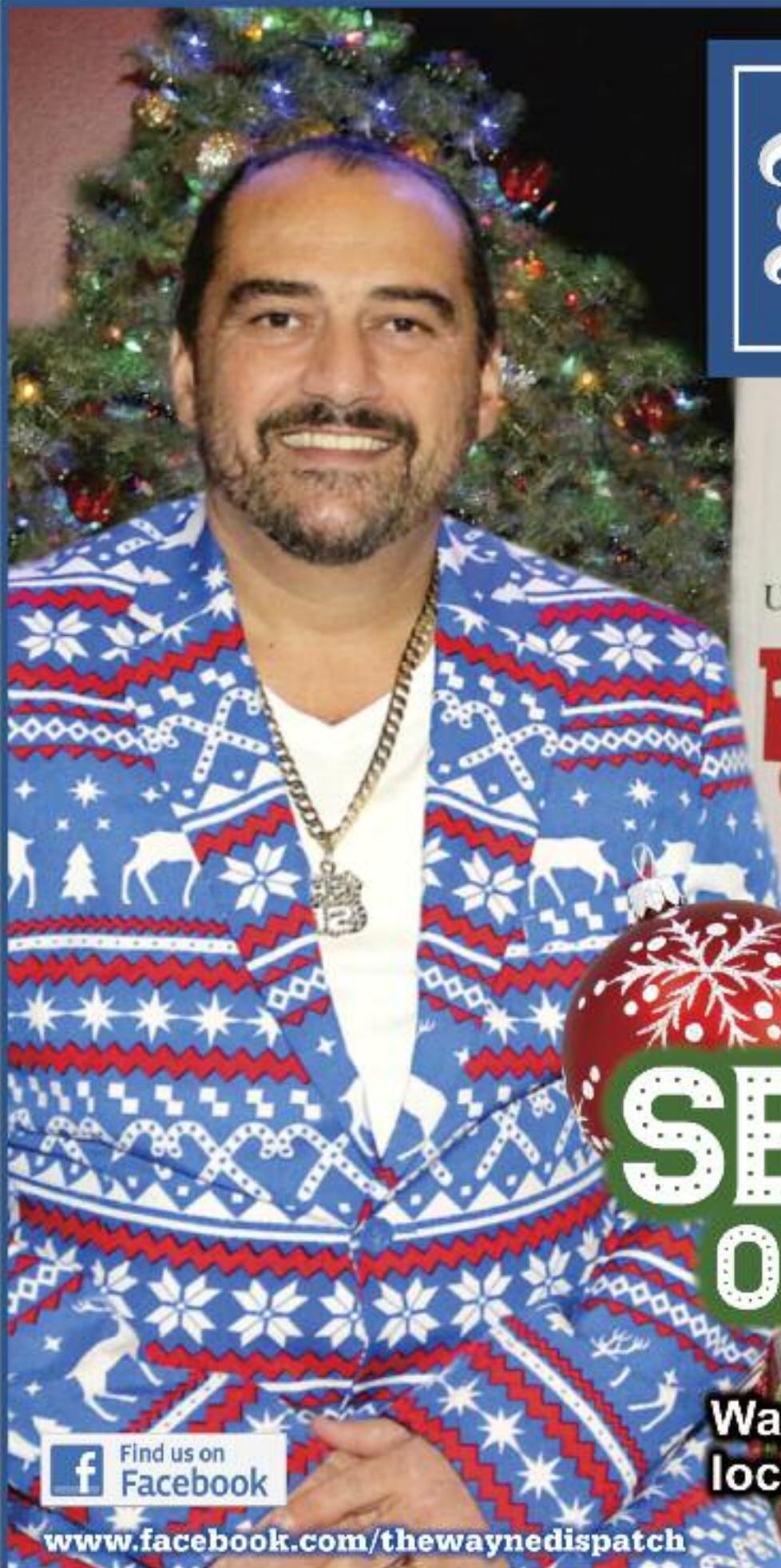


# THE WAYNE Dispatch

DECEMBER 2019



## SEASON OF GIVING

Wayne Businessman helps local children this Christmas

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# Businessman helps local children this Christmas

By Carolyn Marnon

The story starts with a little boy in Kosovo whose only knowledge of Christmas is time spent with friends and family. There are no presents involved in these Christmas celebrations. In Kosovo, "You are lucky if someone had a car," says this now-grown boy, Scott Gocaj, manager of US 12 Bar and Grill in Wayne.

Scott, his siblings (John, Cindy and the "late, great Skender" who died in 2003) and his parents, Mike and Mona Gocaj, arrived in the US after immigrating from Kosovo in 1979. Mike and Mona built a family business with Omega Restaurant (now US 12) where they worked hard for their American Dream. Scott says he would spend his days bussing tables, filling cups of coffee and cleaning, all at a very young age. "Christmas was a busy day," he recalls. But it would be 7-8 years after coming to America that the Gocaj children would learn that there was more to Christmas than spending time with family.

Older brother John injured his leg during the Christmas season one year and had to spend time in the hospital. The family would frequently visit John. One day there appeared 3 giant garbage bags full of presents in John's room with someone telling John to share it all with his family. Scott says he doesn't know who collected all these toys they received, but "I'll never forget it," he says. This was his first American Christmas experience, and he loved it! He remembers the Get Along Gang toys. The Get Along Gang was a group of animals who met in an abandoned caboose and told stories of friendship and teamwork. At the



Scott Gocaj is prepared to receive your donation. Admission to the US 12 fundraiser for the charity event is either a new, unwrapped toy or a cash donation to Toys for Tots at the door.

time, Scott wondered who gave them the gifts and why the gifts were given to them, but "the cat was out of the bag!" he exclaims, and there was no returning to life as it was. Every year since, the family has given each other gifts at Christmas. He is thankful he and his siblings can now give their own kids the Christmas experience.

Scott, his wife Rachel, and the rest of the Gocaj family want to pay it forward which is why US 12 Bar and Grill will be hosting their 4th annual Toys for Tots charity toy drive on Saturday, December 14, from

6:00 p.m. until closing.

"The event is near and dear to our hearts because it helps kids around our area that are less fortunate to make sure they aren't going without a Christmas," said Scott. Scott, John and their friend, Pete Cimeot, decided in 2016 to throw a party and get all of their friends together because "there's no way we could do anything by ourselves that will make a difference, but collectively, with our friends and some local business owners, we are able to form a team that makes a difference together."

With John as his mentor and biggest motivator, Scott has set a goal to fill the stage at US 12 with huge boxes filled with toys that will then be delivered to the Toys for Tots local chapter. "All are welcome that care to help," says Scott about the event. "Please share, spread the word. It's not about us. It's about the kids. Together, we make a difference."

Admission to US 12 (34824 W. Michigan Ave.) for the charity event is either a new, unwrapped toy or a cash donation to Toys for Tots at the door. Help make a child's Christmas dream come true. No child should go without a toy at Christmas. Be part of the team!

If you are unable to attend the event but still want to help, you are welcome to drop off a new, unwrapped toy during US 12's regular business hours through December 16.

## Did you know?

- Toys for Tots was started in 1947 by Marine Corps Reserve Major Bill Hendricks when his wife asked him to deliver a few of her handmade dolls to an agency that helps children in need.
- Walt Disney was a personal friend of Bill's and designed the first Toys for Tots poster.
- When Bill could not find an organization to donate his wife's dolls to, she told him to start one. That year, 5000 toys were collected and distributed by Bill's reserve unit.
- The Marine Toys for Tots Program now distributes an average of 18 million toys to 7 million less-fortunate children annually.



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# School resource officer returns

By Carolyn Marnon

As the bell rings and students, teachers and administrators make their ways through the halls of Wayne Memorial High School, there is a new face that melts into the crowd. Jordan Arndt is back in high school, although he's dressing differently than he did before, and he isn't required to do any homework. He's Officer Arndt, and he's the new School Resource Officer (SRO) at WMHS.

Roaming the hallways before and after school, during lunches as well as during passing times, he makes his presence known to the students. During the times when he is in his first-floor office, he leaves his door open, signaling to students that he is always accessible to them.

After graduating from high school, Jordan joined the Army National Guard. He attended Basic Training at Fort Benning, Georgia in June 2008 and then was able to attend Eastern Michigan University while he served in the National Guard as an infantryman. He had

one deployment to Afghanistan in 2011, and graduated from EMU with a bachelors degree in Criminal Justice.

WMHS has not had an SRO for the last five years due to the short-staffing in the police department. Officers were frequently being dispatched to the high school for incidents, so a recent 3-year agreement between the Wayne Police Department and Wayne Westland Community Schools to assign an SRO will make day-to-day operations smoother for the police department. Officer Arndt will be able to interact with and mentor students on a day-to-day basis, and the school district will pay for approximately one-half of the officer's compensation during the school year. During the summer and school breaks, Officer Arndt will be assigned to the Investigations Bureau at the department.

Why did he decide to pursue criminal justice and law enforcement? Officer Arndt laughs and says his answer is a bit corny. He gives credit to "the butterfly effect,"

whereby some tiny change in one area can have large effects somewhere else. He likes to think his small military role in Afghanistan will have a wider effect on the nation such that others won't have to go there. He also likes to think that his work in Wayne's neighborhoods will be a ripple that has far-reaching effects one day.

"Everyone here at the police department is pleased to have an officer back at Wayne Memorial High School. Having an officer at the school helps keep students and staff safe. The officer will also build solid relationships with those students and staff. Prior School Resource Officers were able to mentor young people and show them that police officers are here to help. I am confident that Officer Arndt will do the same," expressed Wayne Police Chief Ryan Strong.

Officer Arndt was chosen as SRO from those at the police department who submitted a letter of interest for the position. Once chosen, he attended a week-long training from the



Officer Jordan Arndt

National Association of School Resource Officers in Indiana. NASRO believes in a triad concept which trains the SRO as Educator, Informal Counselor and Law Enforce-

See **Officer**, page 6

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# The War on Vets

By Carolyn Marnon

"The War On Vets" truly starts when war overseas comes to an end. Can they transition back into civilian life? How do they cope with their war injuries and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)? How do they deal with the Veterans Administration and their bureaucracy? What about finding steady income and housing? Will they receive compassion and understanding from their family and friends? This Documentary Film will explore the stories of War Veterans and their struggle to deal with emotions that most will never know or understand. Veterans are a tight knit group that tend to keep those horrors locked deep inside. Sometimes, these military men and women will let those secrets out to fellow warriors. Our mission is to bring these stories to light and release some of the burden from their shoulders to assist their healing process. Our objective is to bring Global Awareness and support to those brave men and women who fought for our country, our freedom and our way of life."

Statement of Yoli Von Scott (Writer-Producer) and Eric Von Scott (Writer-Director and USMC)

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/The-WarOnVets>

Eric Von Scott, a 1984 graduate of Wayne Memorial High School, and his wife, Yoli Von Scott, are in Michigan to start work on their documentary "The War on Vets," a documentary Yoli has been inspired to make since she was a young child. Eric was born at Annapolis Hospital and signed up for the Marines at a recruiting station at Metro Place Mall back in 1983, which is why they have chosen to come here to start development on their film.

Born in Mexico City, Yoli says her dad was a World War 2-era military vet. He told Yoli stories of how the military men of World War 2 came home to parades and much acclaim. He told her that the veterans fighting in the Vietnam War were also going to come home as heroes and be celebrated. Yoli tells how she raised and sold ducks from her front yard in Mexico to make money to purchase



While volunteering to distribute food to veterans at Veteran's Haven, Yoli Von Scott sets up the table like a market so veterans can 'shop' for food.

bracelets that had the names of Vietnam veterans on them. The idea at the time was to wear the bracelet until the named veteran came home. A young Yoli got angry when the reception for the returning veterans was less than expected. That event inspired Yoli to say "When I grow up, I'm going to tell this story."

Yoli's family moved to the United States; she became a US citizen when she was 21 years old. She speaks of her aunt who had a love of cinema and groomed Yoli, teaching her about film culture. Yoli recalls wanting to tell stories, whether she

See **Vets**, page 8

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**OFFICER,** Continued from page 4

ment Officer. Their goal is to facilitate safe learning environments, provide valuable resources to school staff, foster positive relationships with students, and developing strategies to resolve problems.

"Wayne is actually a good school," says Officer Arndt. Most of the issues he's called on to resolve involve the occasional fight, cigarettes and marijuana. He says he's not at the school to get the students in trouble. He's there to keep them safe. He sees himself more as a counselor that students can visit to get help rather than going to the school administration. A visit to him is an easy solution for a student who is going through something at home and needs help or advice without getting the police department involved. Officer Arndt wants to be personable to the students and never give the impression of negativity while he is in uniform. "I'm a person no better or worse than you," is what he wants to evoke in his role.

Since he stepped into the hallowed high school halls on October 28, he is grateful for the hellos, the smiles, and being treated like one of the staff. He wouldn't mind being a Champions mentor for a student who wants the help. He says he has

"I am excited to strengthen the working partnership between Wayne Memorial High School and the Wayne Police Department."

**Officer Jordan Arndt**

already had students approach him asking about law enforcement careers and what is involved in pursuing that line of work.

This family man (he has a wife, a young child, a pitbull named Jade and a beagle/basset mix named Gus) who grew up in Canton likes to hang out with his family when he's not working. His daughter is discovering snow and the joys of picking it up and throwing it at her parents.

"I'm not there to get the students in trouble. I want to be seen as a mentor, counselor, someone they can go to," Officer Arndt concludes.

"I am excited to strengthen the working partnership between Wayne Memorial High School and the Wayne Police Department," enthused WMHS Principal James Anderson, Ed. D. "Officer Arndt is a dedicated individual who will help create positive connections with our students. We are already off to a great start and love having him in the halls each day. Myself, and all of the staff at Wayne, look forward to working with him."



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**VETS,** Continued from page 5

was on "stage" with her friends doing skits or as a dancer on stage.

While working as a bartender in 1988 at Spoons California Grill in Buena Park, California, Yoli met Eric, who had moved to Buena Park after being discharged from the Marines. She says Eric and his friend were just leaving the bar when she came in to start her 6pm shift. He took one look at her, told his friend "That's my wife" and stayed until closing. "It was February 19, 1988 at 6:01pm" says Yoli, and they've been together ever since. She says they are best friends and work together at Von Scott Studios where they do videos and short films.

Eric says he has wanted to be a film director ever since he was a child. His dad made home movies and did photography. Eric was inspired to make his own short films. Eric also does photo-realistic oil paintings.

"The War on Vets" project, long lingering on Yoli's mind as her passion project, actually started developing when she and Eric were at a hotel that happened to be hosting what they call "a Cootie convention." A convention for a 3-dimensional bug toy inspired a documentary on veterans? Not exactly. A "Cootie" at this convention is a member of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States, a non-profit veteran's service organization that is based on the principles of good humor and fun. The Cooties provide social and entertainment



Yoli Von Scott laughs with Don 'The Godfather' Vito, a VFW 9885 Bova Blood Brother.

programs to members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). As an advocate for people, Yoli wants to "tell the good, the bad and the ugly" about veterans and how they are treated after being discharged from the military. Originally conceived as a 90-minute documentary for Netflix or another streaming service about U.S. veterans, the project has morphed into something far bigger. Yoli has had requests from veterans in distant countries who want to be interviewed and tell their own stories. Yoli sees the documentary now turning into a series about the suffering of veterans everywhere in the world and what measures can be implemented to ease the suffering.

"There's already awareness," says Yoli. "We want greater global awareness to treat human be-

ings better."

Eric and Yoli have been volunteering at Veteran's Haven in Wayne since they arrived. They also go to VFW 9885 "Bova" in Westland every Saturday where Yoli does karaoke. The couple is trying to bring hope to veterans through their grassroots movement.

The Von Scott's need help funding "The War on Veterans" project. They have chosen to crowdfund the project by setting up a Go Fund Me page. Yoli says crowdfunding eliminates the middleman (investors who want to step in and take control of the project) and helps maintain the integrity of the product the Von Scott's want to produce. She admits the project could take 5-10 years to complete, depending on cashflow to move forward with each step. In the interim, she and Eric will continue to dig for stories. "I love these men and women. We are going to stay here and mine these stories for all it's worth," Yoli says. "Let your voice be heard in our documentary!"

Eric, who quietly sits at Yoli's side while she enthusiastically talks about this project she has dreamed of for so long, sums up what they both feel about the veterans they hope to help. "We can't reach out and hug everybody, but this film can."

If you would like to donate to this project, please visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/The-WarOnVets>.

If you would like to contact Yoli, you can reach her by email: [yoli@thewaronvets.com](mailto:yoli@thewaronvets.com) or by phone: (313) 720-8656.

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# Family-owned business invests in downtown Wayne

By Carolyn Marnon

“We thank God that we have 13 grandchildren and none have a disability that we have to place in a group home,” said Paul Kennedy, owner of Saints, Inc. You may have noticed their newly built administrative office on the former Frank’s Furniture lot next to the Dairy Queen on Wayne Rd. Saints Inc. moved into this new building after occupying space elsewhere in Wayne for nearly 20 years.

Saints Inc. “is dedicated to providing persons with developmental disabilities with a quality experience in a home setting and/or employment within the community which fulfills to the best of our ability the physical, social, vocational, and psychological needs of the customer as expressed by the customer, their families and guardians, and others significant in their lives” reads their mission statement.

Husband and wife team Paul and Victoria Kennedy opened their family-owned business in 1978 to help developmentally disabled adults stay



Husband and wife team Paul and Victoria Kennedy cut the ribbon on their new building in downtown Wayne along with Mayor John Rhaesa, the City Council, and City officials, along with family and friends to help developmentally disabled adults.

a part of their community. Paul’s grandfather, who had persons with disabilities in his home, inspired him to get into this line of business.

Kendal Kinney, Secondary Administrator at the Wayne location where 10-11 people are employed, laughs and calls himself the day-to-day op-

erator. One of his goals is to revamp the company’s website. Someone has written on the whiteboard on the conference room wall “I love Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy” and punctuated the words with drawings of a heart and a smiley face. Kendal says the Kennedy’s want to be a part of the re-

growth of downtown Wayne and were willing to invest in the city by building new offices here rather than continuing to lease space.

Paul says his company does not place individuals in homes nor are they a counseling-type service. Placements of developmentally disabled individuals is done by Community Living Services (also in Wayne), Wayne Center or Washtenaw County Community Health. Saints Inc. role is as a contractor of staffing services to provide care to the individuals in group homes. Staff members provide 24-hour care at the group home, helping the “customers” (as Paul calls the individuals) with food preparation, transportation, laundry, medication, guidance on daily living and any other help needed. Overall, Paul says he employs approximately 165 people.

As it appears on the current website, Saints Inc.’s customer focus goal sums it up. “We believe the quality of our services has a powerful impact on the lives of the persons we serve and the quality of their lives.”

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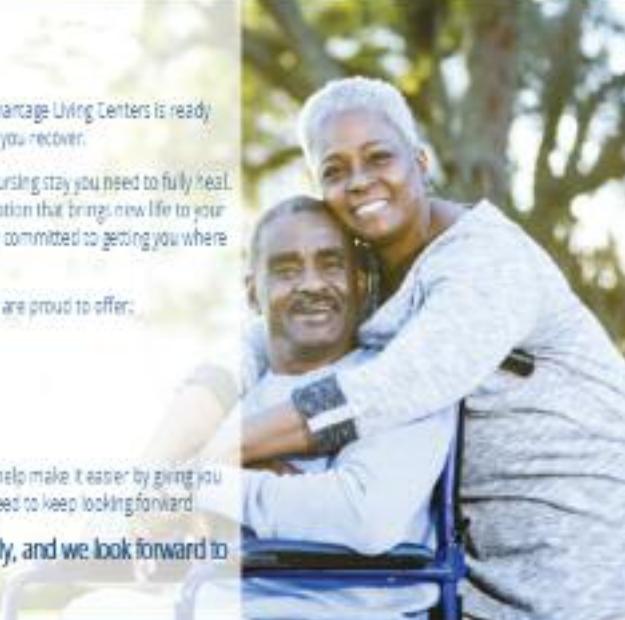
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Here Comes the Bus allows parents to see where their child's bus is along the route and when it will be at their bus stop.

## New technology to track school buses

By Carolyn Marnon

The Wayne-Westland Community School District transportation department has been rolling along with several updates involving their school buses this year.

Here Comes the Bus is a new app being used by the transportation department. The app uses global positioning system (GPS) technology to track the district's school buses.

According to WWCS D Communications Director Jenny Johnson, the school district "has partnered with Here Comes the Bus to offer families an app that will help avoid students and parents from waiting too long for the bus. Here Comes the Bus allows parents to see where their child's bus is along the route and when it will be at their bus stop."

The app can be downloaded to an iPhone or Android device. Parents/guardians can then see real-

time map locations of their student's bus, get push-notifications when the bus gets close by and helps everyone get to the bus stop at the right time.

Jenny says the school district was offered the opportunity to be a pilot district for Here Comes the Bus last year at no cost to the district. The district chose to continue with the app this year.

On another note, transportation Director Rhonda Lyons, CTD, was able to secure a grant from Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy that provided funding for 25% of new buses. "We were able to purchase five buses for the price of four," said Jenny Johnson. Three of the buses are general education buses and two are special education buses. The new buses use either clean diesel or propane technology which can reduce exposure to exhaust fumes while riding the bus.

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# Veterans Memorial project needs help

By Carolyn Marnon

What is happening with the \$26,000 the City of Wayne received in donations last year from military service veterans, members of UAW Local 900 and Ford? The original plan was for the money to go towards fixing the Peace Memorial located next to the Wayne library. After some discussion, the donors decided they did not want the funds to go to the renovation of the Peace Memorial because it was not a memorial that specifically honored veterans.

UAW Local 845 in Canton will be moving to Wayne soon to occupy Wild Bill Copland's former party store on Wayne Rd. They will be bringing with them their Veterans Memorial which will be relocated to the south side of Wayne City Hall. Plans are also in place to designate some parking spots for Veterans Only.

The Wayne Veterans Memorial will be, according to a handout from the City, "a lasting tribute for the many veterans who served their country. Many of these brave souls



Rendering of the Veterans Memorial project for Goudy Park.

died, were declared missing in action, or taken prisoner of war. It is incumbent on all to honor our veterans, both past and present, as we would not be enjoying the freedom we have today without their sacrifice." It is estimated that an additional \$50,000 will still need to be raised. Those funds would go toward preparing the groundwork,

pouring concrete, moving the existing monuments being brought to Wayne, placement of the monuments, flagpole placement, bench placement and any other miscellaneous costs. The City is expecting to break ground on the project in Spring 2020 and hope they will have the money raised by then.

If you would like to be part of the

memorial's history, you can donate to the Wayne Veterans Memorial. Your name will be recorded at City Hall and become a permanent addition to the project. To donate, please make a check out to City of Wayne and indicate "Veterans Memorial" on the memo line. This will ensure your contribution gets deposited into the Veterans Memorial fund.

Checks can be mailed to City of Wayne, Attn: Finance Director, 3355 S. Wayne Rd., Wayne MI 48184. If you prefer, you can visit the Finance Department at City Hall to make a donation. If you have any questions about the Veterans Memorial project, please contact Director of Community Development Lori Gouin at (734) 722-2002 or lgouin@city-ofwayne.com.

"This project and partnership with the UAW Local 845 and the great residents of our community will honor all of those who served our great country. The City is honored to play a part in bringing these groups together for such a great cause," said Lori.





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# Students don't care about what you know until they know you care

By Carolyn Marnon

Wanting to recognize students who make positive contributions to the school community, Wayne Memorial High School's new Principal, James Anderson, Ed.D., answered a few questions about himself, his background in education and what he is striving towards for the students and staff of WMHS.



James Anderson, Ed. D. is the new principal at Wayne Memorial High School.

Photo Credit-Focal Point Studio of Photography High School, and my youngest daughter is a sophomore at the same school.

Some of my hobbies include fishing and jeeps.

## Tell us a little about yourself.

Where to start? I was born in Saginaw, Michigan and moved to Longmont, Colorado when I was 2. We lived there for about 8 years before returning to Saginaw where I finished school. I then attended Western Michigan University where I got my bachelors degree in Elementary Education. I went on to get my Masters from Michigan State University and my Doctorate from the University of Michigan Dearborn.

I am married and have 3 children. My son is a senior at Central Michigan University, my oldest daughter is a senior at Farmington

## How did you hear about this position and why did you want to apply for it?

I heard about the position through a friend and the timing was right for a change. I actually applied for another position in the district to start, but the district and I both liked the possible fit for this position. I enjoy working with high school students, so I am excited to be a Zebra!

## What have you determined to be your top 3 goals/strategies for your first year at WMHS?

My top three goals all build on the strong foundation Mr. Weber (built) over his time at WMHS. I want to increase student engagement in classrooms.

I want to reduce tardiness, absences, and truancy, which is a direct result of the first goal. A third goal is to build systems to recognize those students who do the right things day in and day out; they need to be the students who get the focus

at Wayne Memorial.

## What qualities do you think makes an effective high school principal?

Principals make a lot of decisions in a given day. I believe some of the things that make the most effective principals are the ability to listen, to reflect, and to make tough decisions. Effective principals are also visible and present, so they need to spend a lot of time in the role both during the school day and at after school events.

## What qualities do you think teachers should have in a high school setting?

I believe that teachers need to be engaging and relationship focused. I believe the old saying is true, "A student does not care about what you know until they know that you care." It is one of the strongest parts of Wayne Memorial and one of the reasons I love working here so much.

See **Principal**, page 14

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**PRINCIPAL,** Continued from page 13

**What is your background in education?**

I have been in education for 20 years. I started as a 5th grade teacher in Benton Harbor. I then moved to Farmington Public Schools as an 8th grade science teacher. At 27, I was moved to the assistant principal position in the same middle school. I have also served as an upper elementary principal and high school principal respectively. I have been an administrator for 16 years.

**How do you connect with students?**

I work to be visible in the hallways and the lunchroom and look to make connections whenever possible. One of my first experiences in the role was driving out to Howell Nature Center this summer to spend time with our student senate. Sometimes I get to know students when we reflect on poor choices, but I prefer to get to know them by recognizing their positive contributions to the school community.

**What is the day of a principal like?**

It is never the same. It is one of the pieces I love about it. Every day is different, but all days are busy.

**Why did you choose a career in education?**

I started out only wanting to teach. I worked with an elementary school when I was in a high school psychology class and got the bug. I became an administrator to help the broader community. I am passionate about working to improve schools.

**How are you building a positive school culture with students and staff?**

While we work on tardiness, truancy, and the occasional behavioral issue, I want to focus on positives as well. We are looking at ideas to create incentives for positive behavior and to reward those students who do the right thing day after day. We also look for opportunities to let the kids have fun. This past Halloween

we allowed costumes for students and staff. It was the quietest day in the office this year and people really enjoyed it. I would like to find more opportunities like that in the future.

**What have you found to be the biggest challenge at WMHS and how did you/or how do you intend to meet that challenge?**

I would say truancy is the biggest issue. Even then, it is a small percentage of our overall population. We will work with the county on the most troublesome cases and will handle the other ones in the building. Students need to be in class to be successful, so we are taking a hard stance on attendance.

**What has been your greatest joy as a principal/educator?**

My greatest joy is watching students succeed at something they love. Sometimes that happens in athletics, other times on a performance stage. I also get great joy out of

watching students succeed academically, because it will open doors to a positive future.

**Can you give me 5 interesting facts about yourself to share with the community?**

5? Yikes!  
Of my three kids, one is my stepson, one is adopted from Russia, and one came to us the "old-fashioned" way. You wouldn't know it to look at them. Every family story is unique.

We have a 65-pound black labrador and a 4-pound white Moorkie (Yorkshire/Maltese mix). They are an odd pairing.

I didn't get into Michigan when I was 18, but I returned 20 years later to complete my doctorate. Goals sometimes take longer to complete, but you can if you keep working.

I dislike bananas very much (I won't say hate, but it fits).

Someday far off in the future after I retire, I would like to spend more time in the mountains, like I did when I was young.

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