

The Vindicator

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The Valley's Homepage

LOCAL



MRDD honors client for putting out fire

▲TIM GILBOY poses with his camera at his apartment in Canfield. Gilbo, a client of the Mahoning County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, has won special recognition for his quick action to extinguish a fire at Rockne's Restaurant where he works.

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SPORTS

ECHL team Bombers to end play in Dayton

▶THE ECHL, the hockey minor league in which city officials have shown interest in acquiring a franchise for the Chevrolet Centre, has confirmed that the Dayton Bombers will not play in the 2009-10 season.

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On balance, Valley gymnast is standout

▲JASMINE THOMPSON, Iowa State University senior gymnast of McDonald, takes a shot at winning an NCAA regional championship, and perhaps even an NCAA national title in the balance beam event.

PAGE C1

HEALTH

Some insurers shun common conditions

▶TRYING TO BUY health insurance on your own and have gallstones? You'll automatically be denied coverage. Rheumatoid arthritis? Automatic denial. Severe acne? Probably denied. This confidential information on some insurers' practices is available on the Web.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Urban's spiritual side

▶COUNTRY SUPERSTAR Keith Urban says his fifth album signifies the power of the spirit to overcome problems.

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COMING TOMORROW



▲FOOD: Update your Easter ham with sweet-and-sour plum sauce. Also, check out some recipes for sweet and healthy Passover desserts.



Obama calls for 'painful concessions' from automakers

GM: 60 DAYS OR BUST?

Analysts stay upbeat about Valley plant

By DON SHILLING
VINDICATOR BUSINESS EDITOR

THE LORDSTOWN CAR plant should survive a presidential call for further restructuring of General Motors Corp. — if the automaker itself lives on, analysts say.

General Motors is spending \$350 million at the Lordstown plant to begin producing the Chevrolet Cruze next year.

"The Cruze fits in right where the administration expects people to be buying cars over the long haul," said Stephanie Brinley, an analyst with AutoPacific, Southfield, Mich.

What the administration thinks has become very important.

President Barack Obama asserted unprecedented government control over the auto industry Monday, rejecting turnaround plans from GM and Chrysler and raising the prospect of controlled bankruptcy for either ailing auto giant.

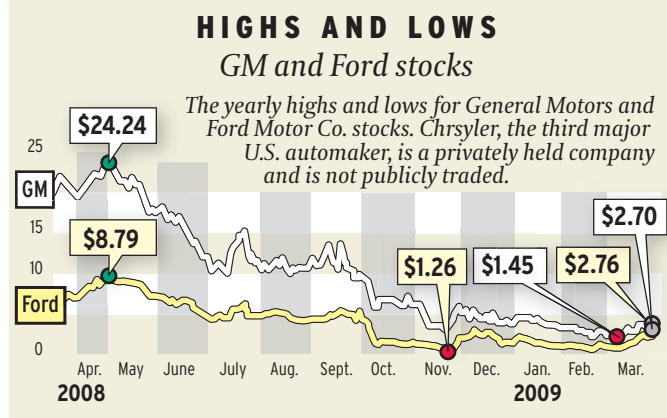
As it pushes more changes, the administration will provide GM only with enough cash to survive for 60 days and for Chrysler to live on for 30 days.

"If he [Obama] is giving us an extension, that's good," said Rick Holloway, who has been an employee at Lordstown for 32 years.

For GM, Obama wants fewer models, brands and dealers, but the larger demands are for concessions from bondholders and the United Auto Workers, analysts said.

"We're not crazy about the added concessions coming our way, be-

See Autos on Page A3



2011 CHEVY CRUZE

Hope lingers in Lordstown

By KATIE SEMINARA
VINDICATOR STAFF WRITER

LORDSTOWN — Some are banking on Lordstown's future in the face of more hardship facing General Motors.

Michael and Judy Hodak of Lordstown recently purchased the Subway restaurant in the Lordstown Plaza on Tod Avenue.

"We're happy to be doing business here," said Michael Hodak, who chose



Hodak

Subway for its business approach.

"In the short term, I'm always concerned about our neighbors, but in the long term, I think Lordstown will survive," he said.

Hodak worked at the Lordstown GM plant for 10 years during the 1970s and '80s and said if the company can prove it is viable within the 60 days given by President Barack Obama, then it should receive government aid.

"I think bringing new blood into GM isn't a bad idea, but only time will tell," he said of GM CEO Rick Wagoner's being replaced by Fritz

See Lordstown on Page A3

MORE GM COVERAGE INSIDE



Henderson

- ▶Fritz Henderson, new GM CEO, recognizes the automaker faces an increased risk of resorting to bankruptcy. **B5**
- ▶Rick Wagoner, former CEO, will get a pension and benefits from GM totaling \$23 million. **B5**
- ▶President Barack Obama is dealing more sternly with the auto industry than he did with the banking industry. **B5**
- ▶The Obama plan at a glance, including the protections and incentives for consumers. **A3**
- ▶President Obama's support for the American auto industry is a rattling clunker. A Vindicator editorial, **A4**

ON WALL STREET:

Wall Street's March rally is on hold after the White House rejected turnaround plans from GM and Chrysler. The Dow dropped 254 points Monday. **B5**



ON MAIN STREET:

It's long past time the government bails out consumers from high overdraft fees, which can inflate the price of a cup of coffee from \$2 to \$29. **A5**

Champion High gives '05 graduate royal send-off to Miss USA Pageant

Miss Ohio USA Natasha Vivoda had almost all A's while taking honors classes.

By ED RUNYAN
VINDICATOR STAFF WRITER



CHAMPION — Chemistry and physics teacher John Fisher remembers Miss Ohio USA Natasha Vivoda from the chemistry classes he taught her during her junior and senior years at Champion High School.

The most notable thing about her may have just been her determination to succeed in the honors-level classes she took.

"I remember seeing you in the classroom every day, paying atten-

tion to the marks on the board and never doubting yourself or doubting your ability to learn that difficult subject," he said of the 2005 Champion graduate.

In 2004 and 2005, there was no way he could have predicted what the future of the flute player and majorette would hold, Fisher said, as he spoke Monday morning in the Champion High auditorium.

He and hundreds of others, including the student body at Champion High, wished her well as she prepared to travel Friday to Las Vegas for the Miss USA Pageant on April 19. She qualified by being crowned Miss Ohio USA last November.

"When you were in my class, I had no indication that you would one day become a physical thera-

See Miss Ohio on Page A3



OFF TO VEGAS: Miss Ohio USA Natasha Vivoda, a Champion High School graduate, is heading to Las Vegas to compete in the Miss USA Pageant. She got a send-off from her alma mater on Monday.

Mahoning commissioners expected to OK \$62M budget, worker layoffs

Even with passage of the 2009 measure, many uncertainties remain.

By PETER H. MILLIKEN
VINDICATOR STAFF WRITER

YOUNGSTOWN — Even after they adopt an austere budget, the Mahoning County commissioners will be facing many unknowns, Administrator George J. Tablack says.

"What we're trying to estimate are contingencies," Tablack told the commissioners in a Monday staff meeting. A vote on the county's full-year budget is set for today.

"It's still a fluid process," added

Williams has plan to avert 34 layoffs

Youngstown council and the administration will meet with union leaders today.

By DAVID SKOLNICK
CITY HALL REPORTER



Williams

YOUNGSTOWN — Layoffs of city employees could be avoided if labor unions agree to give up "special pay," Mayor Jay Williams said.

"Special pay" includes longevity [payments given to workers for the number of years they're employed by the city], clothing allowances, bonuses for not using sick pay and for having college degrees, among other benefits, Williams said.

The elimination of those payments would save the city about \$1.5 million annually, Williams said Wednesday after city council voted to approve the 2009 budget.

Those cuts would be made by both workers and management, he said.

The cuts wouldn't include hazardous duty pay for police officers, firefighters and others who receive it, Williams said.

If concessions aren't made, lay-off notices will be given April 15. Those losing their jobs would be given two weeks' notice, said Kyle Miasek, the city's deputy finance director.

The budget calls for \$860,000 in personnel cuts, most of it from the police department. That could mean up to 34 city workers, including 22 to 26 police officers, losing their jobs at the end of April.

Also, the city is keeping 14 positions vacant, saving \$874,230 a year.

Those were the key cuts made by the city administration to the general fund budget and approved Wednesday by city council to make up a projected \$3.3 million deficit.

Enrique Suarez, chairman of the Solidarity Group, which includes officials from each of the eight unions representing city employees, declined to comment Monday on Williams' proposal.

See Plan on Page A2

SPECIAL PAY

Youngstown workers

Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams is proposing the elimination of "special pay" this year for employees to avoid layoffs.

Most of the layoffs would be in the police department. Proposed reductions would be in the following areas with amounts for an average police officer:

Clothing allowance: \$1,048.41

Longevity pay: \$1,261.60

Non-use of sick time: \$616.15

Fitness fee [toward an annual membership at the YMCA in downtown Youngstown]: \$160.96

Education bonus: \$391.18 for an associate degree, \$453.09 for a bachelor's degree, and \$542.66 for a master's degree [if applicable]

Sources: Youngstown Finance Department, Vindicator files



Tablack, who is also the county's budget director.

How the budget reductions will affect staffing patterns still needs to be discussed with unions representing workers in the facilities department, 911 center and clerk of courts office, Tablack said.

With financial uncertainties causing the commissioners to operate under a temporary first-quarter budget until now, the commissioners will adopt the permanent full-year 2009 budget at 10 a.m. today in the courthouse basement, the day before the legal deadline to do so.

Besides a resolution to adopt

See County on Page A3