



**Stirring  
the Pot**

Brenda  
Perryman

## Affirmative action gave her a 'leg up'

I know where I came from. I know how I've been fortunate to stand in front of thousands of students and teach them to open their minds to the larger picture. I am grateful for the things I've accomplished.

However, neither am I blind nor stupid. I know that my quest for education was not financially affordable for my mother. I realize that I would have not been able to attend school at Eastern Michigan University without a form of affirmative action.

Actually, affirmative action type policies were created by the 1866 Civil Rights Act. It was enacted to help African Americans become full citizens of the United States. This act guaranteed every citizen "the same right to make and enforce contract ... as is enjoyed by white citizens, etc." But in 1896, the Supreme Court's decision in Plessy vs. Ferguson upheld a "separate, but equal" doctrine that marked the end of the post-Civil War reconstruction era.

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which outlawed segregationist hiring policies by defense-related industries holding federal contracts. Then in 1953, Harry S. Truman's Committee on Government Contract Compliance urged the Bureau of Employment Security "to act positively and affirmatively to implement the policy of nondiscrimination." In 1965, President Johnson's Executive Order 11246 actually gave affirmative action its name. As I reflected upon these facts, my beliefs that the playing field has never been level were reinforced.

During the administration of President John F. Kennedy, significant programs were initiated to provide federal financial aid for minority students to pursue a college education. Of these, The National Defense Student Loan program and work study programs made it easier for low-income and minority students, who qualified for college admissions, to have the financial support necessary to attend college for the first time in our nation's history.

I'll never forget the day that my mother and I sat in the office of Mr. Zorn, a financial aid adviser, at Eastern Michigan. He told us that I qualified for a National Defense Loan and several grants. We were so happy that we hugged Mr. Zorn like he was giving us his own money. He was the messenger of the good news that shaped the rest of my life.

Upon graduation, the expectation from the government was loan repayment. Since my first teaching position was in a low-income school district, 15 percent of the loan was knocked off each year. After a little over six years of teaching, the entire loan was "repaid."

I've received many residual benefits from that program. Besides an excellent education, it gave me the ability to enter the lives of so many young people. I can't imagine my life without the "leg up" I received.

The fact that it has been necessary to legislate equality has always been absurd to me. But America's history of slavery and unequal treatment of women and minori-

PLEASE SEE PERRYMAN, C6

# This is a Hold-Up

## Company wears the pants when it comes to keeping them up

Suspenders weren't doing their job. At least not the way Sal Herman thought they should. After time, they weakened and snapped off the waistband and Herman decided to come up with a way to fix the problem. And Hold-Up Suspenders were born.



'We made a better mousetrap. . . now we're in about 2,000 stores.'

Sal Herman  
co-founder, Hold-Up Suspenders

Herman, along with his wife, Judee, started the Southfield-based Hold-Up Suspender Company with a simple concept: They added a tiny needle to the inside of the traditional suspender clip, which pierces the fabric to keep the suspenders in place.

"We made a better mousetrap," said Herman. "We've been making them ever since and now we're in about 2,000 stores."

Business has been growing very slowly, because of the small market niche that Herman has to work with. "I just happen to be a person who wears suspenders every day. I need them to keep my pants up. But it's not a fashion statement today. It was maybe 20 years ago. It's possible it will be again. Hollywood has a lot to do with it. They became very popular after the movie *Wall Street*."

Herman attended his first trade show in Pennsylvania in 1990.

It took him six more years to patent his product and find a manufacturer in the U.S. to produce them.

"Everything is made overseas but it was really important to us to have our product made in the U.S. It took us a long time to find someone who would make it to our specifications," said



Above, Judee and Sal Herman look over some suspenders in their office in the Bridge Industrial Park. Top, the new Double-Ups have Herman's patented tiny needle to keep the clips in place.

Judee Herman. "Our goal is to make every man a suspender-wearer."

Countless hours of phone calls, networking and research went into the business in the beginning. So many, in fact, that Herman said only a self-employed businessman could make it work.

"If I worked a regular 9-to-5 job, I would never have been able to do it. It took a

few years, but now it's profitable."

To avoid the heavy marketing costs, they have taken a "grass-roots" approach to reach their small market, said Herman. Their marketing efforts include selling Hold-Ups through catalogs and the Internet and advertising in magazines geared toward seniors, like *American Legion* and the *Elks*.

Their newest product is a dress suspender called Double-Ups, and is marketed to a younger, professional crowd. The Hermans want their suspenders to not only be utilitarian but also fashionable.

"Smart fashion with the snap of a clip," is the new product's slogan, said Judee, who serves as advertising director and marketing advisor.

The West Bloomfield couple has always worked together, and Judee said she calls her husband, "My Suspender King."

Sal's advice for an entrepreneur who thinks they have a good invention?

"Don't give up. If they have a feeling for it, and if there's enough time, they'll make it."

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STORY BY MARY MCDONOUGH | PHOTOS BY JERRY ZOLYNSKY

## Kids develop social skills, confidence in program

BY SUSAN STEINMUELLER  
STAFF WRITER

On a recent evening in Birmingham, a group of attentive children sat and watched as Allante Thomas, 11, of Detroit used puppets to demonstrate solving a problem.

In the mini-drama, one puppet "student" confronted



Allante Thomas, 11, uses puppets to act out a problem-solving solution for the "Open Doors" group in Birmingham.

another who had spilled paint in the bathroom and convinced him to have integrity and tell his teacher.

"The problem was someone spilled the paint," said Thomas, summing up the skit for his audience. "The solution was to take responsibility ...

Sometimes if we make mistakes in school, it's good to take responsibility and tell our teacher. So now you don't have to get a suspension, all you have to do is go home, tell your mama, and you're done," said Thomas, with a big smile.

Playacting like this is a regular part of "Open Doors," a private group program led by social worker Nicole Kaplan, 30, of Birmingham.

The eight-week program focuses on development of social skills so that children will be happier at home and school. The children practice how to use those skills in real-life situations they may be facing.

"Each week, I have a different theme," Kaplan said. "We do a lot of role playing with puppets. It's a good way to verbalize what they are thinking."

The children are supportive of each other, she said. And, "The most beautiful part of this



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Nicole Kaplan gives cards to children designed to help them with problems and solutions as she leads their social skills group on a recent evening.

class is their realization that they aren't alone. It is very comforting, just like it is for adults."

### BETTER IN GROUPS

Kaplan is a school social worker in Inkster and also works at Beaumont Hospital's Center for Human Development.

She started offering the private groups in September. While she also does one-on-one

social work, she said she enjoys group settings the most.

"I just find that when they are with their peers, they learn more, especially when it comes to social skills. They are learning from each other, and modeling for each other."

Parents who enroll their children may do so because they are socially withdrawn or experiencing some sort of school day problem. Some may have attention deficit disorder. Kaplan organizes groups

according to members' problems and parents' goals. Sometimes, her help extends beyond the group as she meets with parents, principals and school teachers.

Topics covered include self-esteem, controlling impulsive behavior, anger management, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, listening skills, paying attention and communication.

They also learn ways to initiate and maintain positive interactions and friendships, she said.

### FEELING GOOD

The current group, she said, just needed to build confidence. For some, grades were going up as a result.

"Without feeling good about yourself, how are you going to achieve in school?" she said.

It's worked for Julian Sytek, 9, of Oak Park.

Sytek, 9, the first to arrive at the recent Monday night session, switched off the Eminem song he had been listening to from his radio earphones and explained of the group, "It solves my problems. I always

PLEASE SEE PROGRAM, C6

# Company flies high selling old military aircraft to pilots

GADSDEN, Alabama (AP) — Few people bother to look up as an old Soviet military jet emblazoned with red stars screams over the Alabama countryside.

Such sights are common near the home of International Jets Inc., which imports and sells old military aircraft — the ultimate toy for rich people who like to go very, very fast.

For as little as \$250,000, purchasers can own a Czech-made L-39 Albatross, an Eastern Bloc jet trainer still used by the Russian Air Force. The price can go up to \$400,000, depending on the avionics and radio equipment a buyer selects.

To round out the Cold War-to-capitalism buying experience, two former Soviet Air Force pilots, Yevgeny "George" Derevyansky and Alexander Makarenko, provide flight instruction, teaching already-experienced pilots to fly the jets.

"It's the best trainer I've ever seen," said Makarenko, speaking in English tinged by both a Russian accent and a Southern drawl. He teaches using lesson plans and diagrams from the former Soviet Union.

Operating from a hangar at tiny Gadsden Municipal Airport, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) northeast of Birmingham, the privately owned company has sold planes to people from as far away as Japan and France. Advertisements in trade publications bring in customers, as do a Web site and word-of-mouth.

Business slowed over the last couple of years due to the weak economy and the terror attacks. But business began to pick up in May, and a pile of pink message slips from potential buyers

**'They are a wonderful tool for young people to learn about what their fathers or grandfathers flew.'**

Bill Fischer  
Warbirds of America

now sits on the desk of International Jets owner Rudy Beaver.

"It's typical of the American nature," said Beaver, a ballcap on his head and a wad of chewing tobacco in his mouth. "Guys that have money can only sit on it so long."

Beaver's company is one of a handful in the United States that import and restore foreign military aircraft.

More than 1,000 old military planes, both foreign and domestic, are privately owned and operated.

"They're very popular on the air show circuit," said Bill Fischer, executive director of Warbirds of America, a division of the Experimental Aircraft Association, based in Oshkosh, Wis. "They are a wonderful tool for young people to learn about what their fathers or grandfathers flew."

But mainly they're fun, according to Beaver, 74, a long-time pilot who first flew a jet a decade ago.

"A typical buyer is a guy about 50 years old who's been very successful in business and is already a pilot. They're fiercely independent," said Beaver.

Beaver was really describing himself.

A one-time moonshine runner who has sold everything from low cost insurance poli-

cies to Arabian horses, Beaver retired from the construction and real estate business.

A friend, retired Air Force Col. Ken Cobb, urged him to buy a Spanish jet they saw at an air show. Beaver agreed and the two were in business together by 1989. The company now belongs to Beaver.

International Jets got its start selling Hispano Saetas, a Spanish military trainer. The company also has imported planes from Poland and Britain, among other places.

The Soviet collapse opened up a whole new supply of military jets, and Beaver capitalized on the opportunity. "When the East German Air Force went under I bought out their whole parts inventory — 60 tons," he said.

The company currently specializes in the L-39, about 3,000 of which were manufactured for 20 years beginning in 1971. The two-seat aircraft have a maximum cruising speed of about 470 mph (756 kph). Purchased in Europe, the planes are disassembled into four parts and shipped to the United States in large metal containers, arriving by ship in Charleston, S.C.

The jets are completely stripped down in Gadsden, receiving new instruments and state-of-the-art navigational systems to replace older controls labeled in Cyrillic. The ejection seats are refurbished, and the nose is emptied of old radio equipment so it can be used for baggage.

Finally the jets are repainted, typically in a Soviet-style scheme including the red stars.

"I don't like to sell but five or six a year. My guys get overworked and we miss little things," Beaver said. "But one year I sold 16 of them."

## COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger runs Thursdays in The Eccentric and features faith-based announcements from Oakland County on a space available basis. Please submit announcements by noon on the Friday prior to publication. Write: Beliefs & Values, Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009. Or, fax: (248) 644-1314

### Christ Church Cranbrook

At 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30, Dr. Fred Pearson, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, WSU, will talk about "Terrorism: History and Practice," at Christ Church Cranbrook, 470 Church Road, Bloomfield Hills. It's part of the church's adult education Thursday Evening Programs: The current topic is The Church: War and Terrorism. On Feb. 6, a "Terrorism and the Media" panel discussion will feature Guy Gordon, Channel 7 newscaster; Carole Leigh Hutton, executive editor, Detroit Free Press; and Osama Siblani, Arab-American Press.

### Beautiful Savior Lutheran

A Women's Health and Spirituality Seminar will be presented by Parish Nurses and women of the church from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 1, at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 5631 North Adams Road, Bloomfield Hills. Dr. April Sarvis M.D. Ob-GYN will speak on wellness and health issues. Debbie Imirie will share ideas on "Balancing

Service and Self Care." Alysia Kujawa gives a musical presentation. Program cost is \$20, and includes a light breakfast and lunch. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. for the day of fun, information and spiritual nurturing. For information or reservations, call Jackie Ferguson at (586)323-1799 or Diane Traub at (248)475-9166.

### Scout Shabbat

Jewish Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts from all Metropolitan Detroit Councils are invited to join in the National Jewish Committee on Scouting's local Scout Shabbat observances in commemoration of the 93rd birthday of Scouting in the U.S. Shabbat services will be 8:45 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 1, followed by a Kiddush, at Cong. Beth Ahm, 5075 W. Maple Rd., West Bloomfield; and 5:45-6:45 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7 at Adat Shalom Synagogue, 29901 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills. Services are free. The community is invited. For more information, contact Allen Olender at (248) 682-4824, or wa8iww@aol.com.

### Church of Our Savior

"Recognizing Jesus as a Jew - What Difference Does It Make" will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesdays in February. David Blewett, executive director of the Ecumenical Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies, presents the program at 6655 Middlebelt Road, just south of Maple, West Bloomfield.

(248)626-7606.

### Eilu v Eilu

Eilu v Eilu, the adult Jewish learning project of the Michigan Conservative movement, presents "The Sandwich Generation: Obligations as Parents and as Children," a Talmud series with Rabbi Lee Buckman, head of the school of the Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit. Upcoming meeting times and places are: Cong. Beth Ahm in West Bloomfield 10-11 a.m. Feb. 2, 9; and Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills 10-11 a.m. March 2, 9, 16 and 23. Each session may be attended separately. Tuition \$7 per session. Students may register at the door. Prerequisite: Basic ability to read Hebrew. Eilu v Eilu, 6735 Telegraph Road, Suite 310, Bloomfield Hills, can be contacted at (248) 593-3490. Or e-mail learn@eilulearn.org ■ At 10 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 2, Kedushat HaHodesh, a prayer and text study program for women, will be held at the Shaarey Zedek West Bloomfield, B'nai Israel Center, 4200 Walnut Lake Road. Following Hallel and Torah reading in honor of Rosh Hodesh Adar 1, Rabbi Amy Ruth Bolton will discuss "Women and the Mitzvah of Tefillin." Eilu v Eilu's Kedushat HaHodesh programs meet on the first Sunday morning of every new month of the Jewish calendar. For information, call (248)593-3490 or email: cathylichtman@hotmail.com.

## PERRYMAN

FROM PAGE C5

ties makes me understand. It's like "one step forward and two steps back."

Now I come to President Bush who has benefited from another form of affirmative action. He benefited from the fact that his grandfather was his grandfather. If Bush's grandfather and father hadn't attended Yale, it's doubtful that

he would have been accepted: Apparently, his high school guidance counselor thought he should have a backup plan because neither his grades nor his SAT scores were particularly strong. Luckily for him, three out of the seven admissions committee members who voted him in were former members of Skull and Bones, the super-secret, super-exclusive campus society that George Bush Sr. was also a member. The coming months will be interesting. Besides the

impending war, we must be concerned with the future of programs that were initiated to level the playing field. My hope is that George W. Bush reflects realistically and rationally on this issue. Most of all I hope that he, like myself, remembers where he came from.

Brenda Perryman is an author and chair of the fine arts department at Southfield High School. She is also a nationally recognized public speaker and performance poet. She may be reached at bkpperryman@aol.com.

## PROGRAM

FROM PAGE C5

failed before. After I was in here for like one week, I started to not get homework, because I was finishing it all in school.

"I would say that of the therapy he's been in, this has been

the most beneficial," said his mom, Laura Ghedotte. "He loves it. She has a wonderful program. We were so fortunate to find it."

Another student, Nate Carter of Berkley, who attends St. Bede's Catholic School in Southfield, said of the group, "It's fun."

The group costs \$320.

Kaplan said she considers it "a nice alternative to individual therapy."

"Individual therapy can run from \$80-\$150 an hour in this area. They can get so much more out of being an active learner and it is so much less expensive."

Kaplan can be contacted at (248) 703-1092.

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# Abandoned baby symbolizes quandary over Romanian adoptions

BY DANICA KIRKA  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Spania Bancuta has been alive for three months, and alone almost as long — ever since her mother dropped her off at a children's hospital in Bucharest and never came back.

But it may be a while before the Gypsy girl with placid dark eyes can leave her steel crib in Room 5.

Like thousands of other children, Spania isn't eligible for adoption abroad because of a temporary ban imposed by the Romanian government that has outraged Western couples trying to adopt, and prompted concerns from aid workers that kids are being condemned to stay in orphanages.

"The longer they delay the foreign adoption law, the more serious it is for the children," said Sister Mary Rose Christy, a Roman Catholic nun from Burlingame, Calif., who works in Romania.

"That's who is being hurt: the children."

Romania ordered the ban in June 2001 after the European Union claimed the impoverished Balkan country had become a marketplace for children and would have a harder time winning membership in the prosperous 15-nation bloc.

The ban put the EU at odds with the United States, which sided with American, Israeli, Spanish and French couples

trying to adopt. While the United States agreed that the system didn't always protect the rights of children, U.S. Ambassador Michael Guest said his government's interest was to place the children in loving families.

Baroness Emma Nicholson, the British EU official pushing Romania to toughen its laws, says Romania is vulnerable to mobsters preying on children. Americans would never allow their children to be exported the way Romania does, she says, and "should afford the same respect to Romanian families as their own."

One of the worst scandals to emerge with the collapse of communism in eastern Europe was the plight of abandoned children, nowhere more so than in Romania.

Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu had outlawed abortion and birth control, and families who couldn't feed their children handed them off to the state.

The ghastly images emerging of starving and bereft children in state institutions shocked the world, and humanitarian agencies poured in.

The EU advocates limited foreign adoption to a last resort, after foster care or local adoption has failed. Efforts should concentrate on giving children a good home by Romanian standards, Nicholson said.

The ban is supposed to expire in February 2003 but can be extended if a new adop-

**'Americans should produce their own children. If they want children, they should go to countries with high birthrates ... Our main goal is to improve conditions for all children in our country.'**

Ion Iliescu  
Romanian president

tion law isn't passed, and legislators are awaiting EU input before tackling it.

Meanwhile, the ban's opponents have won little sympathy from Romania's leadership, including President Ion Iliescu.

"Americans should produce their own children," he said last month. "If they want children, they should go to countries with high birthrates. ... Our main goal is to improve conditions for all children in our country."

Most of the 84,000 children in state care are not adoptable orphans but youngsters whose parents visit them periodically to retain custody rights, Romanian officials say.

To pay for the strain on state coffers, the government in

1998 began allowing adoption agencies to donate funds to the child welfare system in exchange for the right to parcel out the country's most adoptable children — especially babies.

But in a country where the average monthly wage is 4.3 million lei (\$130), the influx of cash proved too tempting, EU and government officials say.

"Adoption was an area with a lot of corruption," Prime Minister Adrian Nastase said. Before the ban, he said, Romanian orphans had been sold via the Internet for as much as \$50,000, and the state had no legal power to intervene. He didn't elaborate or identify any suspects.

With international aid, the system is slowly improving. Facilities at orphanages are better and the ratio of caretakers to children is better.

The number of children in state orphanages has fallen dramatically from the 100,000 in Ceausescu's time, Romanian officials say.

About 43,000 children now live in state institutions, compared with 57,000 last year.

An additional 41,000 are living in foster families or with relatives, government statistics show.

The total number of domestic and foreign adoptions fell from 4,254 in 2000 to 2,795 last year; there had been 1,060 through August this year. But up to 3,500 children eligible for adoption abroad have been

left in limbo since the ban was imposed.

Some exceptions were made for children whose paperwork was in process, but the ban stunned couples like John Murrow and his wife Amanda, from Six Mile, S.C.

The Murrows had heard about a little Gypsy girl they've named Samantha from a friend working with street children in Romania.

The aid worker found neighborhood kids in the village of Bahnea, 320 kilometers (200 miles) northwest of the capital, playing catch with what he thought was a doll. It turned out to be a 3-month-old girl.

Rescued near death, she is now 15 months old and with a foster family.

The Murrows are sending aid and want to adopt the child.

"I believe in God's time we will adopt her," John Murrow said. "It feels like she is part of us already. She just hasn't joined us yet."

Children like Samantha and Spania also have almost no hope of being adopted in Romania, a country where prejudice against the Gypsy, or Roma, minority runs deep.

Spania came to the abandoned babies' ward at the Caraiman Children's Hospital with syphilis, which has abated with treatment. Welfare workers promise she will be moved soon.

Georgeta Ciobanu, a social worker, is trying to find

Spania's parents, to see if they really want to give up the child for good. Meanwhile she visits her whenever she can, cuddling the little girl in her butter-colored blanket.

"She likes to be held," Ciobanu said.

Child-care advocates say the legal delays are devastating for the children. Sister Christy says that by the time a child is 7 years old, much of his or her development has taken place and been stunted by orphanage life.

"The basic thing you don't get in an institution is love," she said. "Those children never have a feeling of security and it affects their whole life."

Take Alexandru Soare. He's only 9, yet savvy enough to approach any prospective adopter with suspicion.

"I would make them show me identification," Alexandru said. "So they wouldn't steal me," he added.

Besides his age, there's another complication — he has a brother and sister and they come as a package, having stuck together ever since their mother dumped them at an orphanage eight years ago and told them she wanted nothing more to do with them.

Even so, Alexandru, his 14-year-old brother Mihai, and their sister, Mirela, aged 16, still hope for a miracle.

"I think there are people with a good heart," said Mirela. "I wouldn't mind being adopted into such a family."

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