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Big Picture • Local Focus

— Sports

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GIRE & SOTONOFF

FROM SUBURBS **TO SHOWBIZ**

Thank you, Oprah

She changed Hoffman Estates man's life 7 years ago, and he ran with it

Fans of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" remember the moment Paolo Presta's life changed forever.



Paolo Presta

One weekday morning in 2004, while he worked unsuspectingly at Valli Produce in Hoffman Estates, his

family's gro-cery store, Oprah's "Wildest Dreams" bus pulled up and she came into the store.

As Presta quivered, jumped and wept — a clip played repeatedly for years afterward Oprah told him she was making his dream of being an actor come true. He was getting a walk-on speaking role on "Will & Grace," then a toprated show.

Presta took that opportunity and ran with it. He left the suburbs and the grocery business, moved to West Hollywood and began pursuing his dream.

He landed a small, recurring part as Pizza Shack owner Doug Mancino on the soap opera "General Hospital," appeared in several commercials and worked behind the scenes at two popular talk shows: "The Ellen DeGeneres

See **SHOWBIZ** on **PAGE 13**

Geneva speeds up tree removal

By Susan Sarkauskas ssarkauskas@dailyherald.com

Emerald ash borers are damaging Geneva's parkway trees so fast, the city is speeding up removal of trees the pests have killed.

The city council Monday agreed to spend the rest of the \$60,000 in its tree nursery fund right now, instead of next year and the year after, on tree

It also agreed to spend money budgeted for rebuilding the Manchester Course alley, as bids for that project came in \$100,000 lower than expected; another \$95,000 from interest accrued in its debt service fund; and \$45,000 it planned to spend on street paving, out of its capital

See TREE on PAGE 13

An Elk Grove mom with four disabled kids now has cancer





PHOTOS BY JOE LEWNARD/jlewnard@dailyherald.com

Joan Evans of Elk Grove Village says she's worried about overburdening the people who want to help her family as she battles breast cancer. At top, Joan and her husband, Mark, help their daughter Meredith down the ramp in the garage of their home.

Help for the one who helps

By Jessica Cilella \bullet jcilella @dailyherald.com

¬ or the past 18 years, Joan Evans has put her four kids first. She's d there in the morning to watch her 12-year-old autistic son, Brett, wait for the school bus at the end of the driveway. She's there during the day to attend school meetings for her 18-year-old triplets who all have cerebral palsy, including brothers Bradley and Grant. She's there at night to occasionally sleep in the living room next to her third triplet, Meredith, who stays in a wheelchair. But after being diagnosed with advanced (stage three) breast cancer this summer, Joan, of Elk Grove Village, is coming to terms with the fact that now she must put herself first.

"I have a hard time asking for help, so that's probably what's hardest for me," she said, her voice filled with concern. "I'm glad that somebody saw we needed it because I wasn't going to go ask."

That person was Joan's sister-in-law, Patti Stockwell, who is hosting a fundraiser for the family to help them pay their growing medical expenses.

The Joan Evans' Family Fundraiser will be held at 5 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 24, at Ringside Sports Bar & OTB, 554 E. Devon



Bradley and Grant Evans are two of the Evans triplets, besides Meredith, who have cerebral palsy.

Ave. in Elk Grove Village. It will feature food, karaoke, a 50/50 raffle and a silent auction for about 50 gift baskets and items like an electric guitar and two

round-trip plane tickets to anywhere in the United States. Admission is \$35 for adults and \$10 for children younger than 12.

"This is a family that's never had anything," Stockwell said. "I'm not asking for a house makeover. I'm not asking for a million dollars. I'm just asking for someone to help us with the medical bills."

Others who know the Evanses agree the family is deserving of a fundraiser,

See HELP on PAGE 5

Obama digs in on taxes

President calls for new taxes on wealthy to help tame debt

By Zachary A. GOLDFARB AND ROSALIND S. HELDERMAN Washington Post

WASHINGTON President Barack Obama made a defiant call Monday for \$1.5 trillion in new

taxes as part of a plan to find and-forth between Obama \$3.2 trillion in budget savings over the next decade, issuing his most detailed proposal yet to tame the soaring federal

Abandoning earlier compromises, Obama adopted a posture that cedes far less ground in cutting the nation's social safety net and demands much more in terms of new levies on millionaires, other wealthy Americans and some industries.

The proposal drew an angry



weeks. The sharp backand the GOP on Monday also showed how little the political climate has changed since the bitter debate this summer that

enchanted with Washington. The special committee must find \$1.2 trillion to \$1.5 trillion in savings by Nov. 23 or the federal budget will automatically be reduced by \$1.2 trillion starting in 2013,

consumed the capital and left

many Americans deeply dis-

See TAXES on PAGE 6

Highlights of the Obama deficit plan

Tax hikes and reforms: \$1.5 trillion

• Bush-era tax cuts for upper income earners expire

• Limit deductions for wealthier filers • Close loopholes and end some corporate tax breaks

Raises fees to lenders for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to

guarantee repayment of new mortgages. Raises federal security fees for air travelers

Ending wars in Iraq, Afghanistan: \$1 trillion

Cuts and reforms to various federal programs: \$257 billion

• Targets subsidies to farmers and benefits programs for federal employees

Medicare reforms: \$245 billion

Medicaid reforms and other health programs: \$73 billion

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Dist. 303 may not use state tests as a guide

By James Fuller jfuller@dailyherald.com

St. Charles Unit District 303 may re-evaluate its measures of student achievement after an eye-opening statistic from Elgin Community College and state test scores not quite as

stellar as last year's. School board members on a committee tasked with reviewing test performance numbers learned that about half the students who attend ECC upon graduation find themselves placed in remedial math, reading and English classes. The district sends up to 200 kids a year to ECC.

Numbers also show a second year of decline in the number of District 300 juniors

testing at a proficient level in reading. A two-year dip in District 303 is a rare phenomenon. The district consistently scores better than the state average by double-digits in most test results each year. That trend continued even with the dip.

Mark Pomplun, the district's director of student assessments, said staff members are meeting with high school teachers to discuss increasing the difficulty in reading and other course work.

A more detailed analysis shows students in advanced placement courses and those getting A's in standard course work show college proficiency

See TESTS on PAGE 13

Weather So. Pretty. Partly sunny; 73. See the back of Business.



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Help: Father on unemployment after he was laid off

Continued from Page 1

especially since Joan's husband Mark lost his job as an admissions counselor at American InterContinental University — in the same week the family discovered Joan had cancer.

A mother's fight

Joan was scheduled for a routine mammogram in January but canceled the appointment and rescheduled for February in order to attend a school meeting for Meredith.

Putting her children first again, she missed the February appointment to be at a meeting for Brett.

The mammogram was pushed to March, which is when Joan's doctor found a lump about a half-inch long in her right breast. An ultrasound showed nothing unusual and a needle biopsy came back as unspecified, so Joan scheduled a follow-up appointment for three months later.

But by May the lump had grown to a concerning size. Not wanting to wait, Joan had another needle biopsy, and this time it came back cancerous.

On July 14, Joan had a double mastectomy. She also had four lymph nodes, one of them cancerous, removed from her armpit.

Bi-weekly chemotherapy treatments began Aug. 17. She will go through eight sessions of chemotherapy and then begin radiation treatments.

"My first chemo, I just felt like a train hit me and I am not used to this," she said. "I'm not used to having my kids see me like this. It's scaring them, I think."

Joan's mother comes by every day to help with dinners, homework, cleaning and laundry. She also accompanies Joan to her doctor visits and tries to ease her anxieties.

"She's just our emotional and moral support," Joan said with a smile, a small pink-



IOE LEWNARD/ilewnard@dailyherald.com

Mark and Joan Evans of Elk Grove Village, with, left to right standing, Bradley, 18, Grant, 18, Brett, 12, and Meredith, 18. A fundraiser is being held for the family Saturday as Joan is battling breast cancer, Mark has been laid off and the four children are disabled.

cer ribbon necklace gleaming from her neck.

falling on Joan's husband.

"For Mark, this is just hard because he's used to working and not doing the things that I do," she said. "The kids still come to me for most things and I'm trying to explain that they have to go to dad, or to my

"My goal was to just keep helping with their homework and getting them through and my anxiety is that I'm not going to be able to do that for them right now, until I build up my own strength and get through this," she said.

Happy children

A visit to the Evanses' modest ranch-style home would suggest that nothing is troubling the family. The four children often break out in big smiles, especially nonverbal Meredith, who frequently asks for hugs and kisses through

communication device.

Inside the family's living Still, much of the burden is room, adorned with photos of the kids since they were babies, Grant and Bradley say they are enjoying the extra year of classes Joan enrolled them in at Elk Grove High School, where they graduated in June.

"They put our typical high school boys to shame, the way that they behave," said Becky Freeman-Murray, a family support specialist at Clearbrook, an organization that serves children and adults with developmental disabilities. She's worked with the family for more than seven years. "And that's all Joan and her husband. They have raised these kids to be just such terrific kids."

When not making honor roll at school, Grant and Bradley keep busy with sports including basketball and baseball, their jobs and therapy once a week — a service that their younger brother isn't as lucky to receive.

"Brett — we had to stop

gemmed cross and breast canher DynaVox, an augmentative taking him because we couldn't afford the copays," Joan said. While shy, Brett throughly enjoys spending his time outside, riding his bike, scooter and skateboard.

Meredith, who loves communicating through the telephone and going to the mall, recently started a life-skills program at Palatine High School that she will be in until she is 22. She attends therapy twice a week, a task that proves difficult for the family because their old and unreliable Chrysler minivan can't accommodate the electric wheelchair Meredith received last October.

"People used to say, 'Joan, you need a new van,' 'Joan, she needs a (mechanical) lift,' and I'm like, 'You know what, that's just the least of my worries.' I would lift her and do all that," Joan said.

Now, though, the cancer treatments have left her too weak to lift Meredith.

"And now I realize, it's just so important for her to be going places and doing things in her

How to help

Event: Joan Evans' Family

When: 5 p.m. Saturday, Sept.

Where: Ringside Sports Bar & OTB, 554 E. Devon Ave., Elk Grove Village

What: Food, karaoke, a 50/50 raffle, a silent auction for about 50 gift baskets and items like an electric guitar, and two round trip plane tickets to anywhere in the U.S.

Cost: Admission is \$35 for adults and \$10 for children under 12

Information and donations: joanevansfundraiser.com, or Patti Stockwell (708) 606-

new chair," she said.

Mark picks up Meredith from Palatine High School on the days she has therapy and squeezes her into her old manual wheelchair, a tattered device with her name across the seat in childlike letters. Her new wheelchair gets delivered by bus back to the Evanses' house, where it waits empty until Meredith comes home.

While the Evanses are reluctant to admit it, they need a new vehicle that is wheelchairaccessible.

"Unemployment pay you much," Stockwell said. You have a mortgage, you have four disabled children. How do you survive on that? And you have two cars that have high mileage and are falling apart. They don't have the money for a car."

"The thing is you don't know if that car's going to break down. And if that car breaks down, you have Meredith in a wheelchair," she said.

Thankful family

Like many others who know the family, Stockwell's sister, Mary Paulson, said the Evanses

are never ones to want more.

"I see the limited resources that they have and never once did I ever hear Joan complain," said Paulson, who is helping organize the fundraiser. "To know what she's gone through so far and the struggles that they've had so far and then to have this additional crisis — I mean just unbelievable crisis come on to them, I can't imagine anybody not wanting to help out."

"They're such a loving, wonderful family," said Meg Williams, a physical resource teacher at Palatine High School who worked with Meredith through her high school years. "I don't know how (Joan) does it. She's a miracle worker. Running kids here, there and everywhere, and she keeps it all straight and all together.

"They're a very exceptional family," she said. "They're always, always willing to help out everybody else, when really we're trying to help them right now. They would never ask for assistance, so I like the fact that the community is kind of rallying (for them)."

The Evanses say they are moved by the fundraiser and can only express immense gratitude for it.

"It's great. It's a huge blessing," Mark said. "(Patti is) a big-hearted person. She's always doing things for other people." "I get overwhelmed that

to do that," Joan said. "I just don't want to overburden everybody."

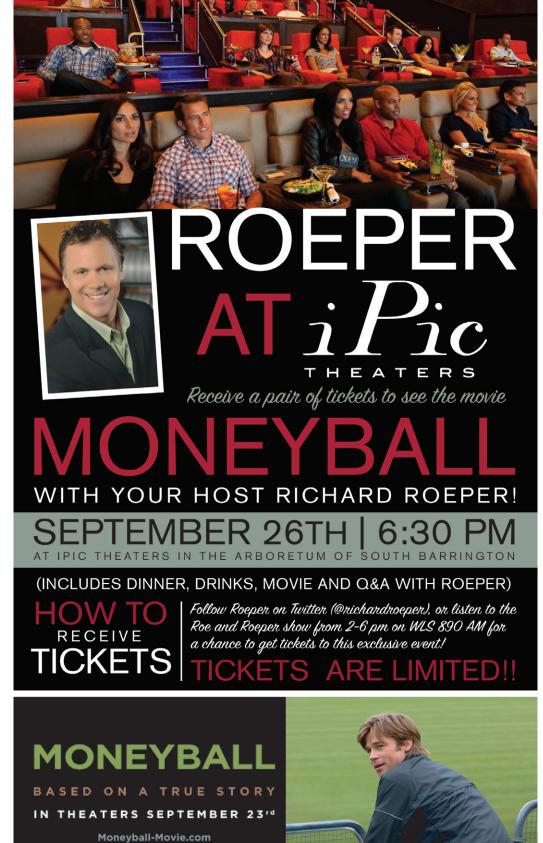
people care enough for us

But friends know the fundraiser is necessary.

"This is a family that has had an extraordinary amount of challenges and they have met each and every one with faith and hard work and tenacity, and yet this latest blow is really frightening beyond anything they've had to handle," Freeman-Murray said. "This is a family that needs mom. This is a family that just deserves all of our help and prayers."







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