



Senator John McCain holds town hall meeting on Oakland's campus

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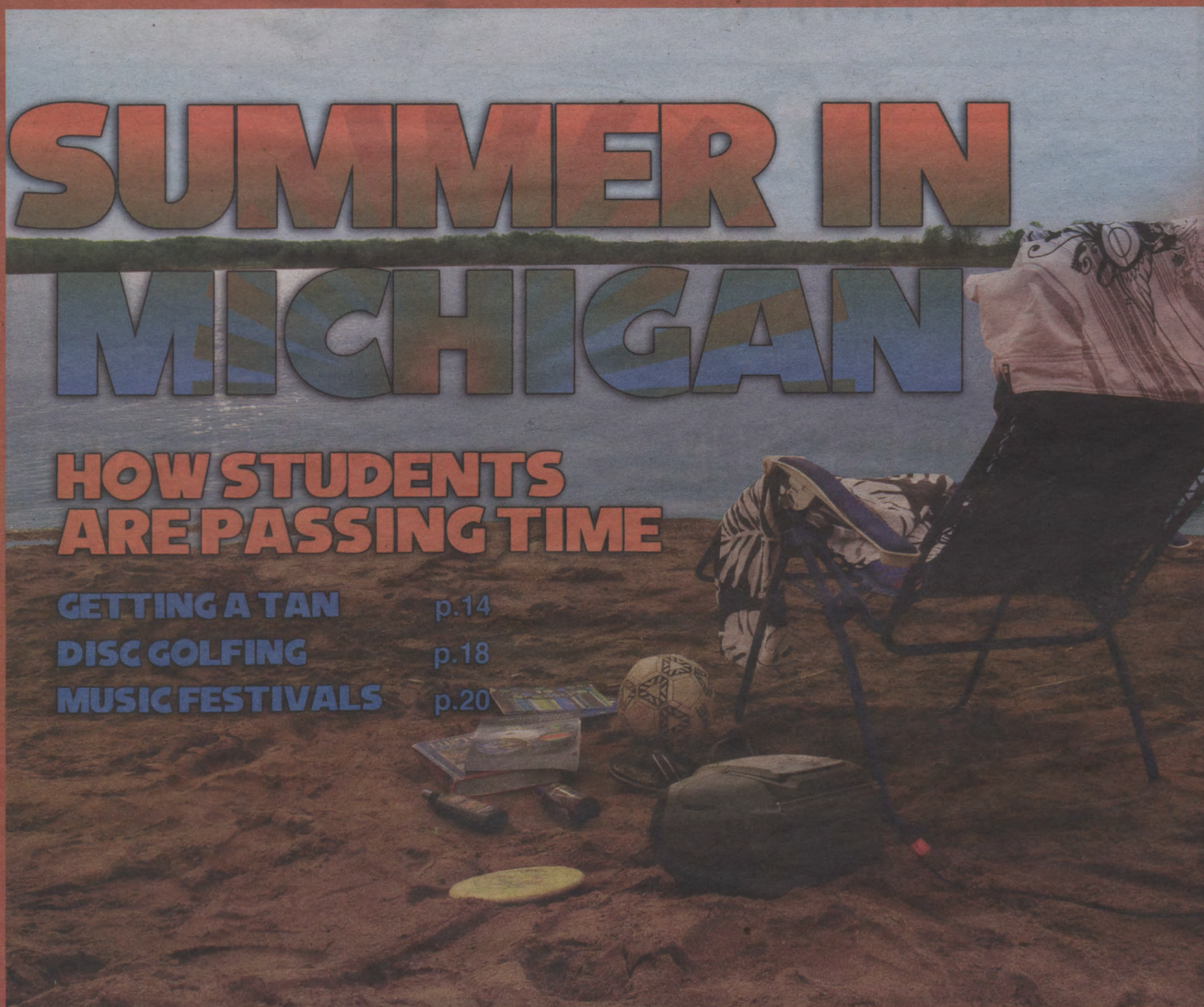
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Cover photo by Dustin Alexander

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May 14, 2008

STAFF EDITORIAL

Gas tax holiday no picnic for consumers

Summer draws nigh and gas prices are at a record high.

Sigh.

To ease our pain at the pumps, political opponents John McCain and Hillary Clinton have a plan. They are proposing a bill that would decrease the sky's-the-limit gas prices by 18 cents during the summer months.

It's hard to see what the problem is with lower gas prices.

But, guess what?

Not only is it too little and too late, it's a scam. And it should worry you.

The gas tax holiday bill would temporarily suspend the federal tax on gas, which is 18.4 cents per gallon for unleaded gasoline, from Memorial Day to Labor Day (May 26 to Sept. 1). But this tax break would be to the gas companies and there is no guarantee that the gas companies would pass on the profits to consumers.

Also, economists project that this tax break would deny the U.S. government \$10 billion of lost tax revenue — money that would have been used on federal roads and highways.

Clinton proposes offsetting this loss by imposing a windfall-profits tax on the oil companies and McCain would offset this loss by diverting funds from other projects.

However, will all this really benefit the American consumers that much?

No, it won't.

Many economists estimate that if the gas tax holiday proposal was passed, the average American driver would save only about \$30 during this three-month period.

Clinton and McCain accused presidential candidate Barack Obama of being "out of touch" with the needs of Americans for denouncing this proposal. But is thinking that \$30 will help American drivers really being "in touch" with them?

Economists estimate that this proposal, if passed, would be much more beneficial to the big oil companies than the American consumers.

McCain and Hillary's support for this proposal is especially perplexing, given that it comes at a time when most environmentalists, economists and politicians, including McCain and Clinton, are trying to encourage lowering oil consumption and U.S.'s energy dependence.

Furthermore, some argue that rather than lowering the price of gas, it may increase it, as lowered price leads to increased demand, and increased demand with the same amount of supply usually leads to an increase in price.

Economists have almost unanimously rejected the proposal as a viable long-term solution. According to CNN, McCain even admitted to this being only a small, temporary measure, saying that "drivers would have a little money left over, maybe to buy a better meal, maybe to buy something for their kids."

If that's the most that this proposal can do for Americans, why are they still promoting this?

Most likely, this is a political gimmick intended to garner more votes from voters who are tired of paying an arm and a leg for gas.

Fortunately, the gas tax holiday proposal isn't likely to pass, as many politicians are opposed to it.

However, even if the proposal does not pass, McCain and Clinton could appear like candidates who are dedicated to the plight of the common people, but only to people who are not looking at the situation closely.

It's hard to see what the problem is with lower gas prices.

Consumers should not fall prey to the ploys of these politicians. The price of gas being lowered 18 cents per gallon for three months might sound great at first, but in the end, you would only save enough money to be able to have a night out at a nice restaurant or buy three complete albums of music from the iTunes store.



TAB, The Calgary Sun/Cagle Cartoons

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Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

— The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States

No more non-mandatory fees, but there's a catch

Newly elected student president Steve Clark sounds off on the tuition increase in his first guest column for The Oakland Post



At 8:30 in the morning I sat in the student affairs office wide eyed and full of coffee for a meeting on non-mandatory student fees. I was quite interested in the prospect of eliminating any fee that I would have to pay.

Examples of non-mandatory would include the graduation fee, transcript fee, applied music fee, orientating fee and many others. Eliminating these fees sounds like a great idea for a number of reasons.

First, it will increase financial aid for students who apply by rolling the non-mandatory fees into the cost of tuition. By doing this it allows financial aid to cover these fees because they are rolled into tuition.

The most promising effect of having no fees is that Oakland will be the only university in the state of Michigan with no student fees. This gives Oakland several advantages in the competitive market of higher education.

Application fees can cost a lot, especially if you are

"As your student body president, if you disagree with me, please come to my office You won't hurt my feelings."

applying to more than one school. Having no application fee also provides relief for students who have a hard time finding the extra money to apply and could potentially boost enrollment.

Non-mandatory fees also just piss people off. The graduation fee, which currently is \$35, is almost a slap in the face after paying 30 to \$40,000 for a

bachelor's degree. As a college student who is paying for my own education, I know how much fees are unexpected and often expensive.

So what's the catch? Well, if it sounds too good to be true than it probably is — that's at least what I've been told. The catch is that tuition will be raised by one percent to make up for the elimination of non-mandatory fees.

Apparently these non-mandatory fees are more mandatory than the name implies because \$1.4 million is generated in income from these fees. For many, the words "tuition increase" are filthy and nasty.

You can package paying for higher education many ways but it's still paying for education. Whether you call it a fee, non-mandatory fee or tuition, students like you and me are going to have to pay for higher education.

I'm sure many people do not support an increase in tuition for whatever reason. As your student body president, if you disagree with me, please come to my office located in Oakland University Student Congress, in the basement of the Oakland Center. You won't hurt my feelings.

Public ban on smoking leaves many out in the cold



For the last six months or so, I have been struggling to quit smoking cold turkey. It would be a logical assumption to say that someone in my position would be for the likely ban of smoking in bars and restaurants, once the Michigan State Senate-approved bill is passed by the House.

The only likely sticking point at this juncture would be disagreement on the possibility of exemptions for casinos and bingo halls.

But in the event that the state of Michigan joins the likes of New York and Maine, I can say whole-heartedly that I will not be smiling.

While no longer being able to smoke in my favorite bars and restaurants may help my attempt to quit in the long run, I do not like the idea of legislators deciding how people should live their lives.

Believe me, I know there are many more valid reasons to support a ban rather than reject it. It seems to be

universally agreed that second-hand smoke is harmful to everyone. I can also empathise with non-smokers who would rather not deal with the smell of smoke on their clothes and in their noses while they eat.

But I still oppose a public ban on smoking and that, naturally, makes me self-centered.

I will agree to this because the argument against this ban is a relatively egotistical one something along the lines of "I thought this was America?"

However, I feel that in a place that essentially satisfies the vice, whether it's overeating or drinking, there should be an anything goes mentality. My vice happens to be smoking so, naturally, I feel I have the right to light up as I relax in the company of friends in a public venue.

Smoking is dangerous and I in no way condone the activity, but we should carefully view the segregational implications of sending the smokers outside.

Like the two sides of fish bowl glass, a literal barrier will be created between

smoker and non-smoker. The unhealthy, smelly people can kill themselves outside while everyone else seated comfortably can grip tightly to their barley and hops that are slowly killing them inside.

There is a double standard here. And, ultimately, isn't everything killing us anyway?

In my lifetime I can venture to guess that eggs have gone from healthy to not healthy, and back again, at least seven or eight times. Not that I would necessarily compare smoking's risk of lung cancer to an egg's risk of high cholesterol, but you are not any more dead from one than

the other if it finally catches up to you. We make a lot of destructive decisions in our lives for no other reason than, well, we can. We live in a country where pushing the envelope is accepted and, often times, this rebellion is inspired by our personal agendas.

However, many will argue that my agenda to smoke around others is not only destructive to me. Again, second-hand smoke is dangerous and my bad habit is technically affecting the health

of others.

It is not my goal to hurt others when I light up and, like I said, I'm really trying to quit.

But perhaps there is a more-imminent threat at the local watering hole, namely the ex-body builder sitting next to you who had one too many Jagerbombs.

My second-hand smoke is affecting your health slowly while one wrong look at Baby Huey over there will negatively affect your immediate health.

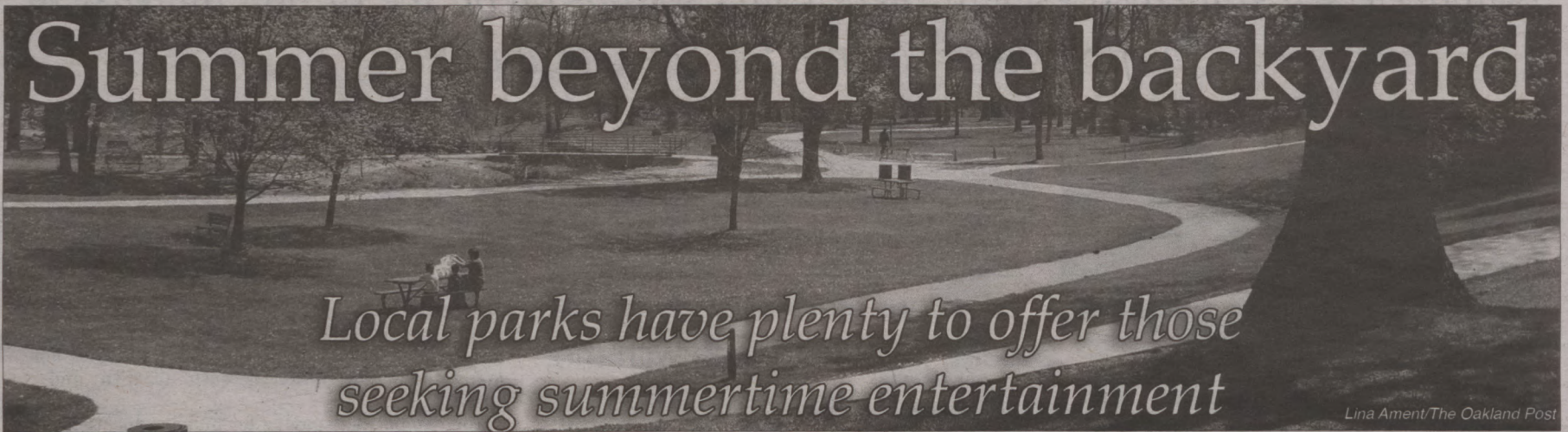
The affects of excessive alcohol consumption are just as dangerous and include both a long and short term impact — whether it's cirrhosis of the liver or a car accident caused by an impaired driver.

Individuals who cannot keep their drinking under control are as much of a threat to those around them as they are to themselves. Drinking is also more widely accepted than smoking, especially in the last few years.

Again, a double standard.

One day, in what will hopefully be the not-too-distant future, I will no longer consider myself a smoker and a public ban on the habit will not apply to me. But I will still harbor bitterness at the fact that if I wanted to smoke in public, I couldn't.

"...we should carefully view the segregational implications of sending the smokers outside."



By **KATHLEEN QUANDT**
Staff Intern

Parks in and around the Rochester Hills area have a lot to offer the public this summer. With activities ranging from hiking and bicycling to baseball and soccer, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the fresh air of the season.

Rochester Hills has 14 parks that total over 900 acres and feature tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball fields, trails and picnic areas among other things.

Emily Olson, a park attendant at Thelma G. Spencer Park said that the park is frequently visited during the warmer months.

"Before Memorial Day most people are fishing and after Memorial Day there are families with kids here for the beach — people rent boats," Olson said.

Spencer Park is wooded with many picnic tables and grills on the grass next to the beach with is a volleyball net. The park also has a colorful play area for kids and a beach house.

"There are three miles of trails," Olson said. "One trail goes around the beach, the other goes into the wooded areas. The trails are dirt and cedar and are mostly for jogging and walking."

"The beach isn't open until Memorial Day, that's when it gets busy," Olson said. "But people do come to the beach before it's open. Almost every weekend we're busy but holidays are busier."

Olson also said that most visitors should bring towels, blankets, lunches and food to grill with them.

Spencer Park also has rowboat and paddleboat rentals, a handicap-accessible fishing pier, boat launch and beach, tennis courts, horseshoe pits and multipurpose sports fields. According to www.rochesterhills.org, park hours are from 10 a.m. to dusk and is located at 3701 John R Road in Rochester Hills.

Earl E. Borden Park is made up of mostly playing fields with bleachers and picnic tables. This sports complex offers four lit ball fields, five full-size soccer fields (including one lighted World Cup field), four tennis courts, three basketball courts, a seven-station batting cage, two roller-hockey rinks, a playground and 30 acres of wooded wetlands and nature areas.

Borden Park is home of the Festival of the Hills and fireworks, a Fourth of July celebration. According to www.rochesterhills.org park hours are from 8 a.m. to dusk and the night game curfew is 11:30 p.m. and is

located at 1400 E. Hamlin in Rochester Hills.

Bloomer Park has several play areas in the grass with picnic tables and grills. The park offers mountain biking, fishing, hiking, nature paths, volleyball and a multipurpose sports field.

The park is the home of the Mike Walden Velodrome, the only velodrome in Michigan. This one-eighth mile bike track is the fastest in the country. Park hours are 8 a.m. to dusk and is located at 45 John R Road in Rochester Hills according to www.rochesterhills.org.

Addison Oaks County Park is located nine miles north of Rochester in Leonard and has a scenic willow tree lined drive that leads to the park area. This park has two lakes and spring fed ponds.

Jan Pung of the communications marketing office at the Oakland County Parks and Forestry Office said that the park sees a high number of visitors once the heart of summer arrives.

"As soon as the weather is good, Addison definitely gets an uptick in visitors until Memorial Day when people start camping in large numbers," Pung said.

Activities at Addison Oaks include swimming, boat-

ing, picnicking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking and special events including the annual Addison Oaks Mountain Bike and Hand Cycle Challenge.

"I would say that the primary [programs] are the mountain bike races in the spring and fall," Pung said. "The campground recreation program is entertainment, various types of bands, activities for kids. The big event is the Fourth of July fireworks that draws thousands of people."

Camping is also available on 174 modern sites with six group-camping areas. Park hours are from 8 a.m. to sunset and located at 1480 West Romeo Road in Leonard according to www.oakgov.com.

Located in Shelby Township, Stoney Creek's is a long, hilly drive through the woods with several picnic areas off to the sides. There is a trail on the side of the road where people walk, jog and rollerblade.

Rachel East, a receptionist at Stony Creek, said there are a variety of events that people enjoy at the park.

"There's a lot of family reunions and picnics, company picnics and school groups," East said.

Amenities at the park include a nature center, a hike/bike trail, beaches surrounding a 500-acre lake, an 18-hole golf course, boat launch facilities and a disc golf course. Park hours from May 1 - Sept. 30 are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Oct. 1 - April 30 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Those who attend the park can pay a \$4 fee for a day pass or \$20 for an annual sticker according and is located at www.metroparks.com. The park is located at 4300 Main Park Road.

Metro Beach is located in Mt. Clemens on Lake St. Clair and features a one-mile shoreline and 1,600-foot boardwalk. This recreational facility is fun for boaters, swimmers and anglers.

"We have a large clientele that bring their boats in," said Jeff Linn, who is the assistant park superintendent at Metro Beach. "We have a par-three golf course and a lot of picnics also. Right now, just at Metro Beach, we're at 1.5 million visitors annually."

The marsh area is a top bird watching site where there are plenty of waterfowl. Park features also include a swimming pool, spray park, marinas, nature center, adventure golf and picnic areas. Park hours are May 1 - Sept. 30 from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Oct. 1 - April 30 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. according to www.metroparks.com and is located at 31300 Metro Parkway.

"We're open every day of the year, but certainly our most busiest times are April through November," Linn said.



LINA AMENT/The Oakland Post

Stoney Creek beach is one of many park beaches in the area that is open for public enjoyment.