

Local Focus

Today's quote

"We want to heighten awareness and to honor those who fought so hard."

Rod Kitick, of St. Charles who took part in the "Walk for the Whisper" to honor his wife Kathy who recently died after battling cancer

News you can use

- The DuPage Symphony Orchestra will present "Romantic Riches" at 7:30 tonight at the McAninch Arts Center, College of DuPage, 425 Fawell Blvd., Glen Ellyn. Violin soloist Siniin Ganatra will perform. Tickets are \$15, \$12 for seniors, \$5 for students. Call (630)690-8644.
- A photographer will be on hand to capture Mother's Day memories from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. today at The Morton Arboretum, 4100 Route 53, Lisle. The \$25 price includes one 8-by-10-inch, two 5-by-7-inch and four wallet-size photographs.

Contact us

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Rats can be cute, too

Organization puts on show to prove rodents could be loving pets

BY CATHERINE EDMAN
Daily Herald Staff Writer

In the blink of an eye, Ovaltine's world turned upside down.

One minute she was stretching for a treat, the next, she was clinging for life. Literally.

"Don't use benches with slippery edges," Debbie Ducommun jokingly cautioned as she rescued Ovaltine, a fancy rat, from beneath a slippery bench.

That's where the little doe (that's rat-speak for female) was dangling by her tenacious little front rat toes after a tiny glitch in Ducommun's how-to-train-your-pet-rat-to-jump demonstration.

Not one to get flustered, Ovaltine then merrily wandered around the table exploring and looking for treats as Ducommun, a.k.a. "The Rat Lady," continued her presentation at the DuPage County Fairgrounds

in Wheaton.

The California resident and well-known pet rat expert was the featured speaker at the first show of the Northern Illinois Rat Organization, at which 47 rats competed and more than 100 people stopped by to learn more about the small mammals.

It was an event geared toward providing information to the uninitiated.

"We want to get them started on the right foot," club president Claudia Nix said.

That means understanding proper pet rat care, and the fact the small mammals are very social and affectionate animals who need lots of attention, she said.

Just attending the show, seeing some of the friendly pets in person, and talking to some of the experts helped Wheaton mom Sandy Brus get more comfortable with the decision to get her 13-year-old daughter, Chelsea, a rat of her own.

"They say they're as intelligent as dogs," she said.

The show included all colors, sizes, and even rat ear shapes. Who knew, after all, that rat ears come in "standard" and "Dumbo" varieties?

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He was rather surprised to discover that particular star-of-the-moment hailed from a breed that is tailless.

Nix said the most common response she heard from those who attended the show was their surprise as the actual likeability of the pets. She reported hearing many "they're cuter than I thought" remarks.

Clearly those spectators caught Ducommun's rat costume segment featuring at least one unsuspecting victim, Buddy, a buck (that's rat-speak for male), donning a grass skirt and a lei.

Group keeps her cancer fight alive

BY CATHERINE EDMAN
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Team KMK wore matching shirts, carried a custom banner and shared a singular mission Saturday morning.

They fought against the ovarian cancer that claimed their missing member, Kathy M. Kitick, who died Feb. 6.

"We want to heighten awareness and to honor those who fought so hard," said her husband, Rod, of St. Charles.

Thousands of area residents packed Naperville's Riverwalk for the eighth annual "Walk for the Whisper," an event sponsored by the Illinois Division of the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition.

After Kitick's diagnosis with Stage 4 ovarian cancer four years ago, her family and friends joined the Naperville walk, Rod Kitick said.

The group grew to 75 people Saturday. They wore T-shirts with a picture of the woman in whose memory they walked, and they raised more than



Three women lead a group of walkers on Naperville's Riverwalk during Walk for the Whisper, an event sponsored by the Illinois Division of the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition. Walkers include, from left, Kay Broeder of Naperville, a 16-year cancer survivor, Vickie Macfarland of Burbank, a one-year-survivor, and Barb Riegler of Downers Grove.

\$2,000 this year, he said.

The walk's "whisper" name comes from the disease's stealth approach. Because symptoms often are difficult to detect until the cancer is in its latter stages, early diagnosis can increase chances of survival by 400 percent, organizers said.

Wearing a photo of his wife, Chryssa, around his neck, Gary Hannah said he wanted people to know that early diagnosis is essential.

With his shaggy dog,

Theodore E. Bear, by his side, Hannah told how Chryssa's cancer was not discovered until it was classified in the advanced Stage 4. The Glen Ellyn resident moved to the area after her death several years ago.

And when he discovered the walk last year, Hannah knew he needed to participate to "raise money and awareness."

Funds from the walk are used to support local and national awareness efforts as well as research.

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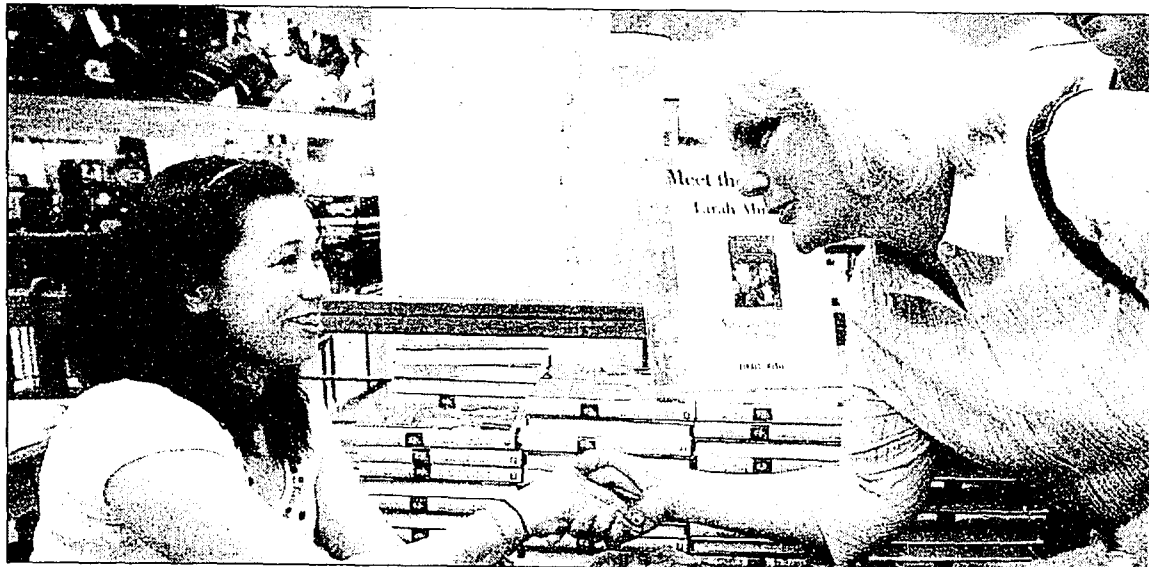
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Story of hope

Teen author Farah Ahmedi, above left, of Carol Stream, writer of "The Story of My Life: An Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky" greets Fran McCue of Plainfield at a book signing Saturday at Barnes & Noble Book-sellers in Naperville. The memoir, written with Tamim Ansary, won a \$10,000 prize on "Good Morning America." Ahmedi, who is on a nationwide tour, will be at a book signing and sale at Wheaton North High School library, 701 W. Thomas Road, Wheaton, from 2:30 to 4 p.m. May 18. For details, call (630) 355-2665.



Motorcyclist is killed in four-vehicle crash

BY CATHERINE EDMAN
Daily Herald Staff Writer

An Elgin motorcyclist was killed in a Friday night accident on Route 59 in Warrenville that closed the four-lane road for five hours.

Warrenville police refused to release all but a few details of

the crash, but said Gregory F. Zajack, 38, died after the 7:38 p.m. accident that involved four vehicles, the department said in a press release.

According to the DuPage County coroner's office, Zajack apparently was driving north on Route 59 when he hit a truck that jackknifed in front of him

just north of Mack Road. He was thrown from the motorcycle, sustained severe head injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene, according to the coroner's office.

Four other people were injured in the crash, according to the West Chicago Fire Protection District.

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MARCELLE BRIGHT/DAILY HERALD
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