

Pure Michigan commercials threatened

■ Ads may be next victim of budget cuts.

By CAROL DRAEGER
Tribune Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH — You've likely heard and seen the catchy, uplifting commercials that "beckon you back to what's real and true" in Michigan.

The Pure Michigan tourism advertisements are one of the few television bright spots at a time when stories of the ailing auto industry and gloomy economy grab most of the state's headlines.

But now even some of those positive Michigan messages are doomed for the cutting room floor.

Recently a state House Appropriations Committee voted to remove about \$10 million from the Pure Michigan campaign to help plug a \$1.3 billion deficit in the state's budget this year.

State Rep. John Proos, R-St. Joseph, a committee member, tried unsuccessfully to restore the funding but he was outvoted.

"Why stop a campaign that has shown empirical success with revenues in the state?" Proos said.

He pointed out that according to the House Fiscal Agency, nearly every dollar

spent on advertising yields an "additional \$2.76 in state tax revenue."

The campaigns, which include billboards at Times Square in New York City, help drive tourists to the state's Lake Michigan beaches and towns, the lawmaker said.

The ads also boast of the rich agricultural bounty that reminds tourists why the state is considered a major fruit belt in the region.

But for Proos, the ads not only help strengthen the bottom line for southwestern Michigan businesses that rely on tourism, they



Proos

are a source of pride about what's good in the state.

"We ought to fight for that point of pride," he said.

"Some of the greatest benefits of Michigan's southwest and Michigan as a whole are contained in the

ads," he said. The committee pared \$10 million of ad campaign funds from the 21st Century Jobs Trust Fund and moved the money to the state's general fund.

Money in the 21st century jobs fund is aimed to create jobs in industries that could very easily "be

part of Michigan's new economy," said Proos.

He pointed out that a bi-partisan group of lawmakers in 2007 supported funding future jobs in the 21st century program.

Instead of raiding the jobs fund, lawmakers should critically review the state's corrections budget, Proos said.

Michigan's prison budget is higher than most states' prison costs, on average, he said.

"To cut the Pure Michigan funding no matter how much is cut, I think is



Tyler

shortsighted," he said.

State Rep. Sharon Tyler, R-Niles, agrees.

She said marketing is a vital tool in attracting people and businesses to Michigan.

She said tourists return to the state and sometimes open businesses.

Plus the ads make people feel good, she said.

"They are a class act. They are so positive," she said.

The measure is expected to be considered by the full House in the next few weeks.

Bluegrass Festival



Tribune Photo/SANTIAGO FLORES

Deuce, center, and Twenty Three perform at the Niles Bluegrass Festival on Saturday afternoon. The festival resumes at 11 a.m. today, with the last band starting about 8 p.m. To view more festival photos and to see a video, go to www.southbendtribune.com.



Cheering them on at Sunburst races

■ Volunteers provide music, water and encouragement.

By ED RONCO
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — Behind the 8,000 or so people who ran the Sunburst races this year was a dedicated army of volunteers and staff members who ran the Sunburst races this year.

We're talking about the behind-the-scenes folks who provide water, play the national anthem, cheer on the runners, and organize the race.

The banner

Nicholas Murray-Vachon graduated at the head of his class from Adams High School this year.

On Saturday, he stood at the head of thousands of runners, playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" from his trumpet at the start of each Sunburst event.

He played the U.S. national anthem at the previous three Sunburst races, too.

"It doesn't make me nervous," he said. "It always seems to turn out all right."

Hydration station

Judy Lee, of Walkerton, has run in every single Sunburst event since first getting involved in 2000.

On Saturday she volunteered on the sidelines, making sure runners stayed hydrated as they made the turn from Lafayette Boulevard onto Riverside Drive.

A 10K runner approached and shouted, "Oh, God, I need it!"

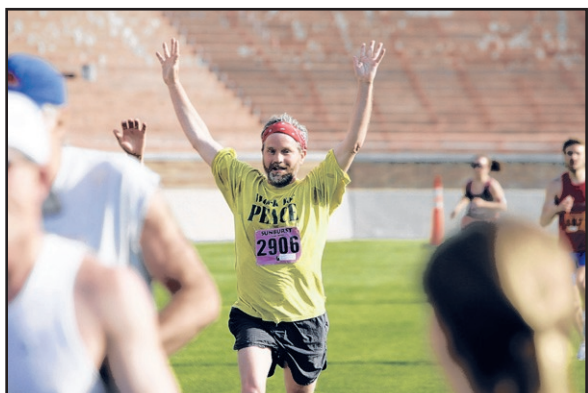
Lee thrust a cup out toward the runner.

"Yeah! Powerade!



Tribune Photos/MARCUS MARTER

Adams High School graduate Nicholas Murray-Vachon plays the national anthem before the start of the 10K race during the 26th annual Sunburst on Saturday in South Bend.



Mike Baxter rejoices after crossing the finish line during the Sunburst.

"This feels really good, that our community can put on such a big production, and a very successful one."

Judy Lee

Woo!" she shouted as the runner trotted past. Seeing the crowds go past is a thrill, she said. "This feels really good,

that our community can put on such a big production, and a very successful one," Lee said. "We see friends coming by all the time. Most of them today are smiling."

Pipes are calling

There are some things you know you're going to see along a runners' course: Mile markers, guide signs, the odd runner "watering" a tree.

And then there are the bagpipes.

Right along the St. Joseph River, where the 10K and 5K trails diverged, South Bend resident Bill Brockie and his son Will, 23, stood in kilts, piping away.

Will Brockie has played for about 12 years, a few years after his father started.

Some people are surprised to see bagpipes, and others use the opportunity to show off their Scottish heritage, the elder Brockie said.

"One guy pulled up his shirt; he's got a St. Andrews flag tattooed on his back," Bill Brockie said.

The Brockies played the classics, including "Scotland the Brave" and "Itchy Fingers."

"Some people came running by and they looked like they were tired," Bill Brockie said. "So I played 'If I Only Had a Brain' from 'The Wizard of Oz.'"

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Tribune Photo/SANTIAGO FLORES

Volunteers work on reroofing a building Saturday at the new Edwardsburg Sports Complex in Edwardsburg.

Sports complex progressing toward reality

■ Pledges for Fields of Dreams now surpass \$1.7 million.

By LOU MUMFORD
Tribune Staff Writer

EDWARDSBURG — It may not look like it yet but Edwardsburg's Fields of Dreams are coming along.

At a progress work day Saturday at the site of the Edwardsburg Sports Complex on U.S. 12, west of Edwardsburg Public Schools, ESC President Ed Patzer said total pledges have now exceeded the \$1.7 million mark.

"We'd have loved to have seen it grow faster but, based on the economic climate, we're thrilled," he said. "The community is behind it."

So, too, are board members, who personally have pledged more than \$130,000.

While \$1.7 million is significant, there's a long way to go. The fundraising goal is a little more than \$3.5 million.

Eventually, the project may feature such facilities as a swimming pool, ice rink and indoor fitness area. For now, however, once work on an office and equipment storage facility is completed, attention will be focused on Phase 1, with ground broken later this summer on the first of eight soccer/football fields and nine baseball and/or softball diamonds.

Also planned for the first phase are a fitness trail, playgrounds, picnic area, paved parking lots, sand volleyball courts, an outdoor basketball court and concession stands.

Eventually, the complex will be home to Edwardsburg's Rocket Football, Little League baseball and Youth Soccer Association programs. Until now, those organizations have relied on the Edwardsburg school system to supply them with fields of play.

But as Patzer pointed

out, those days are likely numbered, as the school district continues to expand. Some soccer fields have already been lost, and parking where soccer games now take place at Eagle Lake Elementary School is "terrible," Patzer said.

The parking problem was confirmed by Joel Meyers, general manager of Falcon Distributing in South Bend, the supplier of siding, soffit and fascia for the project.

"The main issue is parking at all the (sports) facilities," he said.

Meyers said he has four children who will benefit from the complex. Roxanne Lutz, the complex's marketing and public relations representative, also has children — boys, ages 9 and 12 — who will participate.

"They're involved in all the sports," she said.

The project was made possible by the acquisition of more than 100 acres from Judy Padbury. Formerly the Wilkinson Farm property, a portion was donated by Padbury, but there is some debt left on the land purchase, Patzer said.

So more donations are needed, beyond the \$1 million in-kind donation pledged by Selge Construction and the free engineering and site design services pledged by Wightman & Associates. Also, Patzer said he's looking for an expert to advise the board whether a barn with substructure problems can be saved for such use as locker rooms, an indoor batting/pitching facility and possibly a restaurant.

If all goes as planned, Fields of Dreams will be open for use by spring 2010. The contact number for anyone wishing to make a donation or willing to advise Patzer about the barn is (269) 699-7552. The project Web site is www.edwardsburgsportscomplex.org.

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