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TWO DECADES OF THE BEASTIE BOYS
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PIT BULLS Growing number wind up at shelters; many are destroyed

Companions or killers?



The owner moved and abandoned this pit bull named Duke, which made a hole in a fence and went between the neighboring yard and his old home. That bothered neighbor Rose Gierada. Duke was destroyed.



Photos by RASHAUN RUCKER/Detroit Free Press

Michelle Circoloff of Jackson loves her American pit bull terrier, Tank, which can sense when she's about to have a seizure. "He is my medical alert bracelet," she says. Some communities ban the breed because of its aggressiveness when not properly handled or trained. DETAILS, 12A.

Breed has ardent defenders despite its reputation for vicious attacks

By BEN SCHMITT
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Duke is in the driveway again. The hulking gray pit bull barks, gnashes its teeth and charges — as far as the chain around its neck will allow. Abandoned in a backyard on Detroit's west side, Duke frequently crawls through a hole in a fence into Rose Gierada's neighboring driveway. "I tried to feed him," Gierada, 64, says as the pit bull barks. "But he's too mean." Many owners abandon the dogs because they're ill-prepared to take care of them. Some dogs end up roaming

the streets after their fighting days are over. The problem plagues not only the city but also rural areas. Like hundreds of other pit bulls abandoned in the city, Duke's fate is sealed. Michigan Humane Society cruelty investigator Mark Ramos and Dave McLeod captured the dog a couple of days later, after a third failed attempt to find its owner. When seven days expire, without an owner to claim it, the dog is put down. "It's very sad, but from a safety perspective you can't put an animal

See PIT BULLS, 12A



Brenda Ashford's 6-year-old granddaughter, Cassidy Jeter, at the top of the photo, was killed by two pit bulls in 2005. "There's a killer instinct that's in those dogs," Ashford said.

Detroit: Casinos to roll in shutdown

City seeks to save revenue, jobs if budget talks falter

By ZACHARY GORCHOW AND CHRIS CHRISTOFF
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

LANSING — The City of Detroit will defy the state and keep its three casinos open if a budget impasse forces a partial shutdown of state government Oct. 1, a spokesman for Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick said Wednesday. The privately owned MGM Grand, MotorCity and Greektown casinos are cash cows for Detroit and the state and employ 7,000 people, including many city residents. "It's thousands of jobs and also revenue," said Kilpatrick press secretary Matt Allen. "If we have to go into violated status or be cited on this, that's fine. But we're not shutting the casinos." Greektown's attorneys are studying all options for staying open in a shutdown, including the possibility of going to court, said Roger Martin, a Greektown spokesman. "We're hoping that what the mayor's office is saying is true," he said. "We don't want to close. It's not good for the city, it's not good for the

See STATE, 5A

Editorial: Solve this for our schools' sake. 14A

Offer on health care gives auto talks a nudge

Outside help is sought to assess it; progress is slow

By KATIE MERX AND TIM HIGGINS
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITERS

General Motors Corp. and the UAW appear to be inching closer to a deal that would transfer tens of billions of dollars of retiree health care obligations from the automaker to the UAW, but a tentative agreement on the overarching contract is likely "days away," people familiar with the talks said Wednesday. Other people familiar with the talks indicated that GM made a significant proposal to the UAW on Monday before bargaining recessed for the night. If so, it would explain why outside financial experts were asked Tuesday to evaluate the assumptions and financial expectations. "They are making some progress but the negotiations are moving real slow. ... The fi-

See AUTOS, 3A

Come back to freep.com for updates on the auto talks.



AT FREEP.COM: PIT BULL VIDEOS, PHOTO GALLERIES AND GRAPHICS

Supporters board a bus to Jena, La., on Wednesday in Detroit. Some say the case of six black students charged in a white student's beating after a racial incident is similar to what they lived through years ago in the segregated South.



HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press

To metro Detroiters, rally in Jena is a fight for equality

By NAOMI R. PATTON
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

ABOARD A BUS EN ROUTE TO JENA, La. — It all feels too familiar for Harvey Roberts, Don Johnson, Geraldine McConnell and Gwen Felder. There used to be lunch counters they could not eat at and floors at Hudson's where they could not shop. Now, "history is repeating itself," said

Read Naomi R. Patton's blog from her trip to Jena at freep.com.

McConnell, 67, of Southfield. "In the early 1960s, we couldn't eat at a lunch counter. Now ... our kids are going through the same thing," said Roberts, 68, of Detroit. They were among several hundred people traveling Wednesday by charter

bus from Detroit to Jena, La., for a national protest today against what some believe is the disparate and excessive punishment of six African-American Jena High School students. The group left Detroit at 10 a.m. Wednesday for the nearly 20-hour ride that will get supporters to town in time for a 9 a.m. rally. The group will head

See JENA, 6A



HOT, HAZY SEPTEMBER!
Mostly sunny skies.
Chuck Gaidica's forecast, 8B



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