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## Ad asks pope to remove Braxton

Parishioner puts it in USA Today

By GEORGE PAWLACZYK  
News-Democrat

A millionaire philanthropist and parishioner of the Diocese of Belleville paid \$10,000 to place an ad in USA Today asking Pope Benedict XVI to remove Bishop Edward Braxton and assign him elsewhere to administrative or educational duties.

Benedict is in Washington, D.C., on a U.S. tour that has included meetings with President Bush.

Frank S. Ladner's approximately quarter-page ad ran Thursday in the editorial and columnist section of the eastern edition of the newspaper, which has the largest daily circulation in the United States.

Braxton did not respond to the News-Democrat's written request for comment.

After a group of 46 priests asked Braxton to resign, Braxton said in a statement last month, "It is my intention to serve as Bishop of the Diocese of Belleville as long as the Holy Father wants me to do so."

Ladner, 81, of Lawrenceville, who made his fortune in insurance, signed his message, "A parishioner of Immaculate Conception — Bridgeport, Illinois."

It was titled, "An Open Letter to his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and to the Clergy and Laity of the Illinois Diocese of Belleville." Ladner's ad described Braxton as "highly intelligent," but stated the cleric lacked "pastoral skills."

The ad referred briefly to three letters sent recently by laity, priests and nuns to the pope's U.S. representative Archbishop Pietro Sambi asking for intervention con-

Please see **BRAXTON, A2**

## Belle Valley plans single school

Scraps repairs for damaged building

By SCOTT WUERZ  
News-Democrat

Belle Valley North Elementary School has sunk another 2 inches in the last month because of mine subsidence, prompting school officials to abandon plans to save the building.

Interim Superintendent Larry Busch said the school board, which was already planning to build a new school

to replace the aging Belle Valley South Junior High School campus, will now switch gears and pursue plans instead to replace both buildings with a single, larger school off Green Mount Road near the Belle Valley Industrial Park.

"It's the board's feeling that it would be throwing good money after bad in trying to reclaim that building in any form," Busch said of Belle Valley North. "Any efforts toward

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construction will be for a kindergarten through eighth-grade school. At some point in time, we will have to abandon that building."

Bob Gibson, an abandoned mines expert for the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals, said about a third of the Belle Valley North building has been damaged by a collapse 150 feet below the ground in the Ell-Rich Coal

Mine, which operated from 1887 until 1946. Since school workers noticed cracking in the fall, the school has sunk a total of more than 6 inches.

He predicted the school would continue to sink for at least another five years. But it could settle for more than a decade. And if there are more collapses in the mine, damage could extend to parts of the building that have so far been spared.

Please see **SCHOOL, A2**

### At a glance

Belle Valley School District plans to build a new school off Green Mount Road.

It would replace the aging Belle Valley South Junior High School and Belle Valley North Elementary School, which is sinking because of mine subsidence.

The new school would cost about \$21 million.

## FREE AS A BIRD



STEVE NAGY/News-Democrat

The recuperated red-tailed hawk flies away Thursday after being released.

## Healed hawk is released after crashing into window

By MARIA BARAN  
News-Democrat

GRANITE CITY — A Granite City teacher was startled on Easter Sunday morning when a 1-year-old red-tailed hawk crashed through her window and flapped in her curtains.

After the hawk was nursed back to health, Tina Sheppard and Grigsby Middle School students watched the 3-pound bird take flight Thursday morning from the school yard.

Sixth-grader Imani Green, 12, said she liked watching the bird leap out of the special-education teacher's hands and fly over the school building and away in the sky.

"It was so amazing to see something that beautiful," Imani said.

The Treehouse Wildlife Center near

Please see **HAWK, A2**



STEVE NAGY/News-Democrat

Treehouse Wildlife Center worker Pam Lippert holds the now-recuperated red-tailed hawk Thursday before it was released at Grigsby Middle School in Granite City.

## Residents hear about proposed new ordinances

Creates business permit; nuisance fines increased

By RICKEENA J. RICHARDS  
News-Democrat

BELLEVILLE — About 30 residents got a chance to hear about proposed ordinance changes at a public hearing Thursday night.

The purpose of the hearing was to let residents know about proposed changes to the subdivision code, the creation of a business occupancy permit program and the tightening of the nuisance code, which already has

begun. "Almost all of them are a work in progress," said Mayor Mark Eckert, adding that some tweaking will be necessary in the future, but that city leaders are taking the first steps toward progress.

The proposed subdivision code changes include notifying residences within 300 feet of a new subdivision of its construction.

Developers also would be required to submit a written statement that describes how the development would compare to others nearby, to dedicate at least 10 percent of the land to green space for the city and to let the city know how they plan to transport and store equipment.

The business occupancy permit program, which would be effective May 1, would require those wanting to open a new business to get a permit, which would require an inspection of the property before a business could move in.

New business owners would have to submit an application with details about the business and its operations, and that information would be forwarded to all the necessary city departments. Fire Department battalion chiefs would conduct interior inspections, and city inspectors would be called upon if there were any problems.

Existing businesses would not need a permit unless they relocate within the city or change ownership.

"We are going to do everything we can to get this done

Please see **ORDINANCES, A2**

## Belleville's codes and permits

Belleville city leaders held a public hearing Thursday to let residents know about proposed changes in the subdivision code, the creation of a business occupancy permit program, and a tightening of the nuisance code. Here's what was proposed:



**Fines increase**  
Fines for breaking the nuisance code, which regulates things such as health and safety hazards, building conditions and broken-down cars in the street, would increase. The minimum fine for violating the nuisance code would increase to \$250; now it is \$50.

Fines for violating the property maintenance code, the zoning code and the city's building regulations fines also would increase.



**Business occupancy permit program**  
Sort of a "welcome packet" for those opening businesses in the city. A permit will be required for anyone wanting to open a new business, and the permit will require an inspection of the property before a business can move in. Existing businesses will not need to get a permit unless they move elsewhere in the city or change ownership.



**Subdivision code changes**  
Nearby residents of a proposed subdivision would be notified. New requirements for subdivision developers.

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