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Pioneer

February 15, 2005

Local Ferris students selected for “Who’s Who”

BIG RAPIDS - Fifteen Big Rapids area residents are among the 123 Ferris State University students selected for inclusion in the 2005 edition of “Who’s Who” Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.

“Campus nominating committees and editors of the annual directory chose the students based on their academic achievements, service to the community, leadership in extracurricular activities, and potential for continued success.”

These students join a group of campus leaders from more than 2,000 institutions of higher learning in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several foreign nations. Outstanding students have, been honored in the annual directory since it was first published in 1934.

Big Rapids

Yolanda Barnes, College of Education and Human Services

Benjamin Becker, College of Technology

Chun-Chia Huang, College of Business

Karen Huhtala, College of Arts and Sciences

Autumn Park, College of Education and Human Services

Adam Wahl, College of Education and Human Services

Douglas Yesmunt, College of Business

Bitely

Corey Reinke, College of Business

Coral

Cara Ferrell, College of Allied Health Sciences

Hersey

Rachel Sutton, College of Education and Human Services

Reed City

Karsten Hain, College of Arts and Sciences

Kong Xiong, College of Business

Remus

Natalie Wernette, College of Business

Rodney

Aaron Hampel, College of Technology

Stanwood

Michael Terry, College of Business

Pioneer

February 16, 2005

Ferris professor receives top honors from MCC

BIG RAPIDS - Susan Hastings-Bishop, professor of recreation leadership and management at Ferris State University, was chosen to receive the Michigan Campus Compact's (MCC) Faculty/Staff Community Service Learning Award. This prestigious annual award is the highest the MCC bestows on faculty and staff in the state of Michigan.

Dr. Hastings-Bishop will be formally honored during an evening awards reception Thursday at Adrian College as part of the Ninth Annual Institute on Service-Learning titled "Deepening the Commitment to Student Engagement through Quality Teaching."

A member of the Ferris faculty since 1988, Hastings-Bishop was designated by her peers as the faculty/staff person on campus who made the most outstanding contributions in the area of community service-learning. The award recognizes the influence on or engagement of students to be involved in community service or service-learning through modeling, instruction, and/or special projects.

"Dr. Hastings-Bishop is a model for students to follow as a leader in academic service learning," said Lynn Wolfbrandt of MCC. "She has extensive personal experience in community service with the Girl Scouts, and other youth organizations such as the Crossroads for Youth and the city of Big Rapids. She includes academic service-learning projects as class requirements in courses in the Recreation Leadership and Management program and serves as a mentor to students by engaging them in community service and civic responsibility."

Hastings-Bishop has served as the advisor for two MCC Grants: Project HOPE in 2002-03, which resulted in the construction of a habitat garden; and currently for Healthy Youth on Track, a program which advises girls 11 to 17 on health and fitness issues.

She received her baccalaureate degree in physical education from State University of New York at Brockport, her master's in recreation from the University of Northern Colorado and her doctorate in recreation and resources development from Texas A&M University.

The MCC is a state-level, nonprofit organization that promotes the education and commitment of Michigan college students to be civically engaged citizens, through creating and expanding academic, co-curricular and campus-wide opportunities for community service, service-learning and civic engagement.

Pioneer

February 16, 2005

Ferris, Rampage join forces for alumni event

BIG RAPIDS - With Charles "Sparky" McEwen taking over as head --coach of the Grand Rapids Rampage and the signing of Clarence Coleman as a player it gives the Arena Football League team a distinct Ferris State flavor.

McEwen and Coleman are two important parts of a special relationship Ferris is trying to build with its nearest big-city neighbor.

"We have a presence down in Grand Rapids with Ferris State University-Grand Rapids, but this event we're putting on with the Rampage will only help our presence," said Ferris State Alumni Relations Program Coordinator Ira Childress said. "We feel like this is a great opportunity with Sparky and Clarence being with the Rampage to strengthen even more that connection between Ferris and Grand Rapids."

McEwen, a former quarterback and receiver as a player at Ferris, was introduced as the Rampage head coach in August as he made a triumphant return to his hometown as the leader of the professional football franchise. Coleman, a two-time All-American (2000-01) for the Bulldogs at receiver, signed with the Rampage after spending the 2003 campaign with the Buffalo Bills of the National Football League.

McEwen and Coleman will be two of the featured individuals to take part in an alumni event in Grand Rapids. For a \$35 ticket, fans can watch the Rampage take on the Austin (Texas) Wranglers at 7:30 p.m. All seating will be either in the Grand Suites or the Corporate Cages at Van Andel Arena. Prior to the game, from 5 to 7 p.m., there will be an alumni dinner and reception at the "The B.O.B.-Dr. Grin's."

"Basically, this event started this summer after Sparky was hired as the new coach of the Rampage and it really came together when we had the alumni flag football game (Aug. 28 against Grand Valley State in Big Rapids)," Childress said. "Once Sparky got the job, he really wanted to do something with Ferris down in Grand Rapids."

"Sparky is excited to talk to the alumni and let them know how proud he is to be from Ferris State," he added of McEwen, who also is director of football operations for the Rampage.

Ferris boasts a large base of alumni in Kent County and the university wants to do everything within its power to help those 5,000 or so individuals remain in contact with the school.

The \$35 tickets, which include pre-game dinner reception and Rampage game tickets, are limited and payment must be made with the reservation. For more information about tickets for the events, the Ferris State Alumni Office can be contacted at (231) 591-2345.

The reception also will feature current Bulldogs' head coach Jeff Pierce, who embarks on his 11th season at Ferris State this fall and is the school's all-time winningest coach. Pierce is scheduled to discuss the program's recently-signed 26-player recruiting class and the Bulldogs' outlook for the upcoming season.

As part of the event, numerous Ferris merchandise and apparel items will be given away.

For Ferris, and the Rampage, the opportunity is too good to pass up.

“Both Sparky and Clarence have meant a great deal to Ferris' football program over the years and we want to show our support in return,” Childress said. “This is a great opportunity for Ferris Alumni to interact with these outstanding role models and capitalize on this unique event.”

Pioneer

February 17, 2005

Buy your tickets now for Friends of Ferris dinner and auctions

With Michigan financial problems at the forefront and higher education one of the targets of cuts in recent years, it becomes even more important for Ferris State University to muster all the support it can find to insure the best funding levels possible.

The Friends of Ferris is a political action committee designed to rally support in Lansing for FSU and its programs and initiatives.

The Friends of Ferris will be holding its annual fundraising dinner and auction later this month to support its actions for FSU and is hoping to draw a large crowd to the event on Saturday, Feb. 26 at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center.

Time is getting short, but tickets are still available at \$50 each for the social hour at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 7 and silent and live auctions of some really great items.

For instance, those who have gained a few pounds over the holidays and during the confines of wintry weather will certainly want to bid on a three-month membership for two to PT Plus. Or perhaps you would rather forget about the fitness fling and bid on a seven day stay at Bridge View Resort on Bois Blanc Island.

Looking ahead to a little warmer weather, attendees will have the opportunity to bid on a chance to drive in the Mecosta County Area Fair's Celebrity Harness Race.

And, then there will be the opportunity to bid on a hand-crafted log bench for someone who want's to sit and watch the world go by.

Or perhaps, you would rather bid on some more practical items - gift baskets with spa and hair care products, certificates for some great golf packages, a night out at a local casino and some great hunting packages.

Put up the money, have a great dinner and a lot of fun and know that the proceeds are going for a great cause - to support an institution of higher education that has been part of this community since September of 1884.

Pioneer

February 18, 2005

Ferris to oversee Michigan's Freedom to Learn program

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State University has assumed responsibility for Michigan's Freedom to Learn (FTL) program and will work with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to administer \$3.7 million in state funds and \$2.7 million in federal funds related to the program.

Transfer of this program places Ferris in a leadership position critical to the continued transformation of education in Michigan, according to university President David L. Eisler.

"The Freedom to Learn model is key to enhancing the ability of our Michigan students to compete for the future economic development of Michigan and the nation," said Dr. Eisler.

The statewide education program aims to improve student achievement in core academic subjects by providing students with access to 21st Century learning tools. FTL focuses on creating a one-to-one environment in which students learn with computers, not simply about them. The program also is designed to bridge the digital divide, expanding technology opportunities to middle school students, especially students in rural and high-priority schools.

The goals for Freedom to Learn are ambitious yet attainable:

- Foster effective and efficient learning environments;
- Empower teachers to share ideas beyond the walls of their classrooms;
- Provide parents with the tools to increase their engagement with student learning;
- Encourage universal access to technology;
- Provide Michigan students with the skills to lead in the 21st Century workforce.

"Transition of the FTL program to Ferris State University is recognition of Ferris as a state leader in professional education development and helps build stronger working relationships with public schools," said Michael Harris, Ferris vice president for academic affairs.

Dr. Harris, who will coordinate the program in cooperation with MDE, noted that the efforts of Scott Hill-Kennedy, Ferris vice president for governmental relations and general counsel, were critical in the university being chosen to oversee the program.

Ferris will work closely with MDE to coordinate and provide professional development to school personnel, and administer grants for acquiring technology, developing the

curricula and adopting best practices for classroom learning. Already, this program serves more than 20,000 Michigan sixth-grade students who are connected to learning through educational technology, enhanced curricula and teachers with advanced training.

Pioneer

February 19 & 20, 2005

Ferris to buy property if board approves

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State University (FSU) officials are moving forward with the decision to purchase land currently occupied by Forest Hills Mobile Home Park and the school's board of trustees is slated to approve or deny the proposal Feb. 26.

This issue will come before the board during a 9:30 a.m. meeting at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center.

Forest Hills, owned and operated by Patricia Stein, of Oakland County, is a 30.7-acre parcel of land located at 14400 Northland Drive, positioned south of town. Big Bear Appraisal Services of Big Rapids valued the property at \$971,000, which is Ferris' negotiated bid for the sale, FSU's Vice President of Administration and Finance Rick Duffett said. No closing date yet is set.

Results from two phases of environmental studies conducted by American Hydrology Corp. of Portage were released late this week, reporting no pollution is present at the site, Duffett said. After being deemed "clean" property, Ferris administrators decided to recommend the purchase to board members.

"This is the largest contiguous tract of land on the east side of (old) 131 available for the university to purchase," he said. "It attaches to the racquet facility."

The Ferris Racquet and Fitness Center is located at 14342 Northland Drive. Ferris officials currently have no development plans in the works for the mobile home site if board members approve the purchase, Duffett added.

Forest Hills is home to approximately 30 to 40 people who were notified in a letter dated Jan. 25 of Stein's intent to sell her property and close the park by March, Stein's lawyer Don Helder of Hults and Helder PLLC said.

Stein approached Ferris about purchasing the land after she decided to terminate her business, according to the Jan. 25 letter.

Pioneer

February 19 & 20, 2005

Residents express concern over closing the mobile home park

BIG RAPIDS - Forest Hills Mobile Home Park is slated to close the end of February and residents are concerned.

Ferris State University negotiated with the park's owner and operator Patricia Stein, of Oakland County, to purchase the land for its appraised \$971,000 value if its board of trustees approves the sale during a Feb. 26 meeting.

Residents are concerned about the owner's decision to cease business operations because they say it is too expensive to move. They plan to picket the decision Wednesday from m a.m. to 1 p.m. in front of the park.

"People are depressed, scared, crying," Forest Hills resident and mother of two Cherie Tolles said. "People are angry ... they don't know what to do."

Tolles said she moved to the park in June 2004 after a divorce, taking her mobile home's title over from her father, Alpha Hoyt, a member of Forest Hills since 1900.

"No one can come up with the money to move.... People can't get into a regular apartment because we're low income," she said. "There are waiting lists or people don't qualify ... that's the reason we live here."

Stein asks in a letter dated Feb. 17 residents relocate trailers by March 21. This letter written on behalf of Stein by her lawyer, Don Helder of Hults and Helder PLLC, states residents may choose one of two relocation options.

Scenario One allows title holders to move and leave their trailer behind for Stein to take care of the disposal process. The negotiation requires residents move on or before March 21, the letter stated. Scenario Two allows title holders to move their trailer and be reimbursed \$1,500 by Stein if the mobile home is moved before March 21.

Residents are asked in the letter to fill out and return paperwork to Helder highlighting each mobile home owner's choice by March 1. Both scenarios will be revoked if owners do not complete the paperwork process by March 1, according to the letter.

"This is not enough money," Forest Hills resident Susan Jackson said, adding moving her mobile home two years ago costs \$3,000.

Said Tolles, "This is just very frustrating... lawyers are telling us Stein is within her rights to give us 30 days notice."

Pioneer

February 21, 2005

Community 'Walks for Warmth' to raise funds for heating emergencies

BIG RAPIDS - More than 100 residents "Walked for Warmth" Saturday afternoon in Ferris State University's Student Recreation Center during the 14th annual event.

The Mid Michigan Community Action Agency (MMCAA) event benefits the Walk for Warmth program, which aids Mecosta County families during heat-related emergencies, MCAA Outreach Coordinator Patricia Chrisman said. Donations help families who may need a new furnace or propane to heat their home.

"This helps Mecosta County residents during a heat-related emergency when all other sources of funding have been exhausted," Chrisman said.

"These are emergencies that may not fit normal criteria."

Statistics from the 2004 event show Mecosta

County walkers raised \$9,195, which helped 42 families.

Tallies are not yet in for 2005, but organizers anticipate funding will average that of past years.

"Our turnout is about average compared to last year but we've had a good response, as always," Chrisman added.

Chrisman credits local businesses that help make the event a success and also involvement from many of FSU's registered student organizations. Sponsoring this year's event was Al's Maxi Products and Bob's Plumbing.

Some local businesses providing services during the event were Java Jack's, Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center and Bulldog Radio.

The Detroit News

February 22, 2005

Race relations get a new push in Howell area

Area leaders hope attendance at the conference will help erase racist image.

HOWELL -- Several local civic leaders will attend a conference in Dearborn about race relations and regional cooperation, to help dispel perceptions of racism in Livingston County.

Pat Convery, president of the Howell Area Chamber of Commerce, and Steve Manor, Howell's mayor pro tem, will attend the New Detroit conference in Dearborn Friday. Howell City Councilwoman Dawn Cooper also said she might participate.

"I think participation in these events helps other people see Howell in another light," Manor said.

There is a history of Ku Klux Klan activity in Livingston County. Former KKK Grand Dragon Robert Miles lived in Cohoctah Township, north of Howell, and burned crosses on his property. He died in 1992.

City and county officials are quick to say Howell's reputation doesn't accurately reflect the community as it is today. Howell's growth has transformed the small country town into a suburban city in one of the state's fastest-growing areas.

The perceptions of Howell as racist community came up again earlier this year, when several KKK robes and paraphernalia were auctioned in the city. Howell's civic leaders raised money to buy one of the robes through the Livingston 2001 Diversity Council, a local group that promotes tolerance throughout the region,

The group purchased one of the robes for \$700 and donated it to the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids. The group meant the purchase as a statement that Howell embraces diversity and not the racist incidents of its past.

"Southeastern Michigan generally is recognized as a highly segregated area," Manor said. "I think this conference is important to our economic progress and our social interaction."

Mary Ellen Ahmad, 41, is a Howell resident who has lived in Livingston County since 1988. The owner of a small business in downtown Howell is glad to hear that leaders in her community are taking steps, like attending the New Detroit conference, to improve the reputation of Howell and reach out to other metro Detroit communities.

"I think it's an awesome idea," Ahmad said. "It's just a step toward showing everybody we are moving forward and not backward."

Pioneer

February 23, 2005

Free Winter Orchestra Concert Sunday

BIG RAPIDS - The Ferris State University West Central Chamber Orchestra will present its Winter Orchestra Concert on Sunday at 4 p.m. at the United Church of Big Rapids. The concert is free and open to the public.

The church is located at 120 S. State St., Big Rapids, across from Family Video. For assistance with attending this event, please call The Ferris State University Music Center (231) 591-2501.

The orchestra is under the direction of Richard Scott Cohen.

This year's annual winter orchestra concert features a wide variety of styles ranging from classical favorites to Jazz, and featuring works by Tchaikovsky, Satie and Mozart.

The program will include the following works: "The King's Gavotte" from the opera, "Rosine" by Gossec; "Capriccio Italien, Op. 45" by Tchaikovsky; "Gymnopedie" by Eric Satie; "Jazzin' About Suite" by Pamela Wedgwood; and "Symphony No. 15 in G Major, K. 124" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

The FSU West Central Chamber Orchestra (WCCO) is sponsored by Ferris State University as part of its "Music for Life!" initiative. It is comprised of FSU students, adult community members and select students from throughout West Central Michigan. Ferris students can earn credit and scholarships for their participation in the WCCO by enrolling in Music 271. Adult community members and qualified pre-university students recommended by their directors may participate free of charge. This string orchestra rehearses every Tuesday evening throughout the school year from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Music Center on FSU's main campus. All experienced players of string instruments are invited to join the orchestra. Please contact Cohen at (231) 591-2484 or rscohen@ferris.edu to get signed up.

Pioneer

February 23, 2005

Ferris hosts exhibit of large-scale paintings

BIG RAPIDS – “Rappart,” an exhibition of paintings by Detroit native Jim Stella, will be shown through March 4 at Ferris State University’s Rankin Art Gallery.

Stella began his art education in sculpture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. He also was a cum laude sculpture graduate from the University of Michigan’s School of Art. His interest then turned to painting, and after attending Detroit’s Center for Creative Studies, he traveled the world to gather ideas and influences for his entirely self-taught techniques.

“Painting gives me a larger scale that I can work on without the tools needed for sculpture, like the welding and the grinders, and I can express myself better,” said Stella. “My mind works faster trying to put something down with a paint brush than trying to work on a three-dimensional sculpture, because the sculpture takes longer to do. Basically, I want to put my ideas down while they’re fresh in my mind.”

Stella’s large-scale paintings, some of which take up an entire wall are layered with information and language that is forever fresh in appearance. A singular theme is slowly revealed through the collage of bold graphics, bright colors and stiff text.

“These images come from everyday life, inspired by what -might happen on any particular day, or from listening to people and seeing how challenging, confusing and stressful the world can be at times,” he explained. “I feel that if you take the time to actually sit down and look at the art, you can find some fun and some humor in it, but you can also find a lot of truth. And that’s what I want to convey, a sense of empathy and connection with the everyday world.”

Rankin Art Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

Pioneer
February 25, 2005

Trustees to consider new degrees

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State University's Board of Trustees will take action on three enhanced baccalaureate degree offerings at the university's Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids during its regular meeting Saturday at the Holiday Inn Conference Center. The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. and is open to the public.

At present, Kendall provides a "general" fine arts program that offers students concentrations, rather than majors, in drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, sculpture or woodworking and functional art. Their diplomas read "Bachelor of Fine Arts: Fine Arts Painting," or the appropriate distinction for each of the concentrations. Kendall is proposing to continue its BFA: Fine Arts and additionally offer students the opportunity to major in painting, photography and sculpture and functional art. Thus, they would earn a BFA in Painting, a BFA in Photography or a BFA in Sculpture and Functional Art. The significant difference is the level of development the degree in each major offers the students, especially a student seeking to prepare an extensive and professional portfolio either for graduate school, a gallery or both.

The board also will review acceptance of the campus master plans for the Big Rapids and Grand Rapids campuses as developed by Neumann Smith and Associates, Inc.; five honorary doctorate recipients; a \$298,230 Federal Earmark Grant for Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Enhancement and Outreach Expansion; and a Michigan Universities Coalition on Health, Inc., Self-Insured Health Plan for Ferris Flex program participants.

In addition, trustees will enter into executive session for strategy session connected with the negotiation of a successor collective bargaining agreement with the Clerical Technical Association, to consider with university general counsel the legal advice presented in a written opinion dated Feb. 14 and to consider the purchase or lease of property.

The Detroit News

February 25, 2005

Second KKK auction slated in Howell

Community leaders and residents object to sale, but it's just business, owner says.

HOWELL -- Lorna Brennan is not happy with the idea of another auction of Ku Klux Klan items in Howell.

The owner of a small, independent coffee shop in downtown Howell thinks a second auction of KKK paraphernalia and the media scrutiny it brings will have a negative impact on the area and its reputation.

"I'm just sorry that Howell gets so much publicity connected to that paraphernalia," Brennan, 35, said. "It's not a true representation of the community."

The Ole' Gray Nash Auction Gallery plans to host a second auction of KKK and Nazi items April 9 in downtown Howell. Those items include KKK paraphernalia such as knives, fliers and a Klan robe.

"I'm an auctioneer," said Gary Gray, the auction house's owner. "I'm not a magician. I don't go into a back room and conjure stuff up. People brought this stuff to me. I'm just running business as usual."

Gray said he is not trying to offend anyone, but the media attention from the last auction has brought out more people who want to sell KKK and Nazi paraphernalia.

Many of the people selling the KKK and Nazi items said they are unable to offer the items on eBay, so Gray is accommodating them, as he would any other customer, he said.

"I think it reflects horribly on the community," said Howell resident Mary Ellen Ahmad.

Gray helped create a media frenzy earlier this year when he auctioned a number of pieces of KKK paraphernalia, including several robes, on Jan. 29.

The controversy started when Gray briefly displayed one of the robes in the auction house's front window on Michigan Avenue in downtown Howell.

Local officials pressured Gray to remove the robe from the front window. The publicity helped bring Gray more KKK items for auction. Gray had hoped the auction would generate sales of \$40,000, of which he would collect 20 percent. The sale brought in \$24,500.

Several leaders of Howell-area institutions have been quick to condemn the latest plans for another auction.

“I think it’s pretty clear he really wants to market this kind of material that promotes hate or intolerance,” said Pat Convery, president of the Howell Area Chamber of Commerce.

“The auction will not keep us from continuing our efforts to let everyone know they are welcome in our community.”

Howell City Manager Shea Charles said: “It’s really a case of one merchant that doesn’t properly reflect Howell. We wish he would take his business elsewhere, but we can’t make him.”

There is a history of KKK activity in Livingston County. Former KKK Grand Dragon Robert Miles lived in Cohoctah Township, north of Howell, and burned crosses on his property. He died in 1992.

During the first auction, local leaders raised money to buy one of the robes through the Livingston 2001 Diversity Council, a local group that promotes tolerance throughout the region.

The group purchased one of the robes for \$700 and donated it to the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids.

The group intended to have the purchase serve as a statement that Howell embraces diversity and not the racist incidents of its past, said Victor Lopez, president of the diversity council.

City Manager Charles said he doesn’t anticipate local leaders will respond at all to the upcoming auction. There are no plans to purchase any items for donation to a museum.

The Grand Rapids Press

February 25, 2005

Sall Family Expecting Triplets a Year after Death of Newborn

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State men's basketball coach Bill Sall and his wife, Karen, again have great expectations.

But there's a happy and miraculous difference from a year ago.

Last year, while Sall was guiding his Bulldogs to an unexpected North Division championship in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, the couple sadly awaited the birth of its first son, Calvin.

Since December of 2003, the Salls knew Calvin was afflicted with anencephaly, a brain malformation that affects one in 1,000 children, and limits their life expectancy outside the womb to, at the very most, a precious few days.

Anencephaly is a condition caused by a neural tube defect that results in the absence of a major portion of the brain, skull or scalp, and doesn't allow the infant's brain to develop properly.

A lonely ordeal

Except for immediate family and close friends, the Salls awaited the birth alone.

Calvin was brought into the world on March 26, 2003, but did not survive the birth, or the chance to meet his sister, Delaney, now 2¹/₂, if only for a few moments.

But Delaney won't be an only child much longer.

Next month, Karen is due to deliver identical twins, plus one, around the same date Calvin was born.

"Triplets, my friend. Can you believe it? Neither can I," is how Bill broke the news to yours truly after Ferris State's recent overtime win over Grand Valley State to lock the two rivals into a first-place tie atop the North Division standings.

"It's kind of amazing, and what an incredible gift, especially after what happened last year."

The 37-year-old coach, a former star at Unity Christian and Calvin College, was told by his wife of the multiple pregnancy last October, while he was beginning practice.

"The first thing she said to me was, 'Are you sitting down?'" Bill said. "Then she tells me we're going to have identical twins, plus one ... like someone just scored a basket and was going to the free throw line for plus one."

As for the sex of the triplets, Bill said it's not three girls. "There's at least one boy in there, which is all I wanted to know," Bill said. "If it had been all girls, that would have been fine, but I wanted to be prepared for that, since we already have Delaney."

The Salls have been comforted by the many ultrasounds and visits to specialists that have shown that there are no problems with the three babies, including no signs of anencephaly.

"I do look at all this as a blessing," said Karen, 33. "Obviously, last year was very difficult. To not only be blessed with another pregnancy, but then to have triplets, and have them all look very healthy, is an overwhelming blessing for us." The Salls were told by doctors that there was anywhere from a one- to three percent chance of having another occurrence of anencephaly.

"That's not real high, but high enough to be on your mind," Karen said. "Then when I heard it was twins; I worried a little about that. Then when I was told it was triplets. It got to the point where we simply said that everything is in God's hands, and, thankfully, everything has been great."

Karen was admitted to a Grand Rapids hospital on Feb. 16 for regular observation. She will remain hospitalized until the births of her new threesome, in about four weeks.

"If I was having a single pregnancy, the due date would be May 25," Karen said. "But because we have triplets, it's best to take the babies early to prevent (umbilical) cord problems. And it's best to be hospitalized early with triplets coming."

Tough decision looming

"I've been told that once we get to 32 weeks, it's safer for them to be taken out of the womb."

That would be about the time Bill and his Bulldogs, who are ranked 24th in the NCAA Division II national poll, would be finishing up regional play, should they advance that far.

Will daddy be at his wife's side when the Salls' new three-on-three basketball squad is introduced?

"We've talked about it," Karen said. "It will be up to Bill, who I support 100 percent when it comes to his coaching. I also have very supportive family and friends who will be there regardless."

"We've already had so many friends and family step up to give us help," Bill said.

"With three of them, you need a lot of assistance." Especially with little Delaney being recognized as the "plus one" of the triplets. "I joke with Delaney and keep asking her

how many babies are in momma's tummy," Bill said. "She says five. That's two off. But she's still about to get a major surprise."