

Former head of IT charged in embezzling court case dies

By JOSEPH KOZIOL JR.

Stephen Decatur, the central figure in the \$1.8 million Geauga embezzling case, died Monday at University Hospitals in Cleveland, according to Geauga County Prosecutor James Flaiz.

The cause of death was unknown as of early Wednesday, Mr. Flaiz said, adding that Mr. Decatur had been hospitalized since September. Mr. Decatur was 59 and had moved from Chester Township to Shaker Heights, the prosecutor said.

The county was planning to take the case to trial soon after an exhaustive investigation.

"I am frustrated the state of Ohio will not have its day in court," Mr. Flaiz said. "Through the criminal proceedings, my office has frozen a number of Mr. Decatur's assets, and we will continue to pursue his estate for monetary recovery for the taxpayers of Geauga County."

Mr. Flaiz said the case was one of the most complex his office has ever handled.

Tracking thousands of emails and vendor payments without the use of the county's computers or phones, because of the late Mr. Decatur's control of them while he was still in office, kept prosecutors and a high-tech forensic accounting firm busy working late into the night for months, the prosecutor said.

The investigation would ultimately involve the Geauga County Sheriff's Office, the county treasurer's office, the FBI, the Chester Township

Turn to Case on Page 3

Burton reviews proposals by two trash haulers

By JOSEPH KOZIOL JR.

Two trash haulers gave their sales pitches and Burton Village residents got a chance to ask their questions last week as the village prepares to seek proposals for a single-trash hauler.

About two dozen residents turned out for the meeting that included representatives from Waste Management and Rumpke Waste and Recycling Services, which have made draft proposals to the village.

Sarah Mathews, a municipal sales representative for Rumpke, began by introducing the company through a video slide show to residents. She noted that it is a family-owned company headquartered in Cincinnati. The slide show presented a history of the company since its founding in 1932 and its current status as a promoter of recycling services with 700 million pounds of items recycled now yearly. She added that the company has an A-plus rating with the Better Business Bureau and has more than 2,000 employees.

She also provided residents with a comparison of the two companies' proposed pricing for the five-year term in the village's proposed contract, which saw increases over the five-year period from \$17.43 to \$18.87 per month. The numbers presented by Ms. Mathews for Waste Management showed a monthly starting price of \$16.50 and \$19.30 at the end of five years.

Ms. Mathews said senior citizen discounts

Turn to Trash on Page 2

"In so many towns across America, there are no adequate ball parks for today's youth to learn and play our national pastime. Many once beautiful fields have fallen into disrepair and have been neglected. The same opportunities that I enjoyed as a boy are becoming scarcer for so many around our country." — Jonah Schulz



Photo by Alana Clark

Jonah Schultz, 23, of Chardon recently started a nonprofit called Diamonds in the Rough which aims to rehabilitate old, unkempt baseball fields into state-of-the-art facilities that will elevate the play of young baseball players. Mr. Schultz wanted his first project to be the baseball field behind the Fraternal Order of the Eagles in Chardon.

Diamonds in Rough

Geauga grad launches project to refurbish Chardon baseball field

By JOSEPH KOZIOL JR.

There are moments in a child's life that will forever shape their futures.

For Jonah Schultz, it came on Chardon's Fraternal Order of Eagles baseball field when he got the chance to play in a Little League All-Star game.

"It was the first time I got to play under the lights," Mr. Schultz said. "I felt on top of the world. I know I was a small fish in a big pond, but at that time it made me feel like I was one of the best ballplayers in the world."

Baseball is what brought him and his friends together, sharing a common passion. It would lead to a life centered around baseball, first playing

for Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin High School, and then on to college ball at the University of Findlay and finally a pro career with the Roswell Invaders in New Mexico.

With his baseball career over, Mr. Schultz said he was unsure where life would take him next. Then a drive through his hometown brought inspiration.

"I took a drive to the baseball field behind the Chardon Fraternal Order of Eagles, the field where I played in my first Little League All-Star game. After taking time to reflect on my past and to what purpose I wanted to dedicate my future, it dawned on me. In so many towns across America, there are no adequate ball parks for today's youth to learn and play our national pastime. Many once beautiful fields have fallen into disrepair and have been neglected. The same opportunities that I enjoyed as a boy are becoming scarcer for so many around our country."

Turn to Ball on Page 2



Art Palette

West Woods Nature Center, 9465 Kinsman Road in Russell: Annual juried art show. On display through Monday.

Fairmount Center for the Arts, 8400 Fairmount Road in Russell: pARTners Project studio displays work. On display through Nov. 27. Information: 440-338-3171 or www.fairmountcenter.org.

Chagrin Falls Library, 100 E. Orange St. in Chagrin Falls: Paul Paquette displays collage works. On display through October. Information: 440-247-3556.

Stage Lines

Geauga Lyric Theater, 101 Water St. in Chardon: "The Games Afoot." Through Sunday. Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets and information: 440-286-2255 or geaugatheater.org.

Patterson Fruit Farm, 8765 Mulberry Road in Chester: Fairmount Center for the Arts fundraiser. Saturday from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Performance by the Fairmount Dance Company. Cost is \$10 per person and free for children under 3. Reservations and information: 440-338-3171 or www.fairmountcenter.org.

CVLT, 40 River St. in Chagrin Falls: "The Mystery of Irma Vep." Through Oct. 13. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. Matinees at 2 p.m. on Sept. 30. No performances Oct. 5 and Oct. 6. Tickets are \$18 with \$4 discount for seniors, youth and students. Tickets and information: www.cvl.org or 440-247-8955.

Chagrin Documentary Film Festival. Oct. 3-7. Tickets and information: www.chagrinfilmfest.org.

CLASSIFIEDS, **A11-19**
EDITORIAL, **A6**
EDUCATION, **A10**
EVENTS, **A9**