

# A Reader's Note on Acts of Kindness: Spirit of Goodwill is Alive in Granger

By Christine Parkhurst

Carla Putrich, a Granger Gazette reader, wrote to tell us of a good deed that did not go unnoticed. Times are tough for many families and as the cold weather sets in around the holidays, things can get tougher. Here is the story of two business owners who stepped up to help families in need.

"During this time of year we often hear or read about people going above and beyond what they have to do to help other people. I happen to know someone that started helping parents in need of a break two years ago and has recently stepped up to help families in need again," writes Carla.

Mike and Beth Garatoni own Growing Kids Learning Center. During December of 2008, the couple noticed stress levels in many families were at an all time high. In an effort to help, they offered a free night of childcare to families. In the true spirit of goodwill they continued to occasionally offer a free Saturday night of childcare in 2009.

Carla writes, "They weren't sure if (the stress) was due to the holidays, the economy or both, but it didn't really matter; they just knew they wanted to help the families by giving them a break."

Through 2010 the Garatonis have offered one free Saturday night of childcare each month. In addition, Carla writes, Mike and Beth are not only now giving families two free Saturdays of childcare, but they have offered to help even more. Mike sent a letter to parents titled "Operation Snowpants." In it Mike offers to buy families that are having financial difficulties proper winter attire for the children, including hats, gloves and snow pants. Since Growing Kids is a licensed center, outside playtime is required for the children as part of their day. It is required that all children go outside when the temperature, including wind chill is above 25 degrees.

"The problem is not all the children have the proper clothes: winter coat, hat, gloves and snow pants. Mike stated that this is not something he normally does and may not be able to do in the future, but he just knew it is cold outside and decided to do something," said Carla.

*(Continued on Page 6)*

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"This shows the level of understanding and compassion he has for the families that trust the care and education of their children to his business, and that's something he never forgets."

Carla goes on to note that the Garatonis reach out to others with their time and resources through their children's schools and sporting events, "and I'm sure in many other ways that I'm not even aware of. They are two people with big hearts."

The Granger Gazette would like to thank Carla for giving something heartwarming to read about this holiday season, and a great reminder that we can all do our part in being kind to others when we see an opportunity to do so. To Mike and Beth, thank you for all that you do; your kindness is a great inspiration.

## Big Ten Coming to Penn

By Christine Parkhurst



The Big Ten will be coming to Penn on Friday, Feb. 11, when the Purdue Boilermakers compete against the Iowa Hawkeyes in a duel match. This event takes place at 7:00 p.m. at Penn High School in the main gym. Tickets are only \$5. The opportunity to see a match of this level is rare, so buy tickets early! See a Penn wrestler or buy them at any Penn wrestling match this season. For more information, visit [www.pennwrestling.org](http://www.pennwrestling.org).

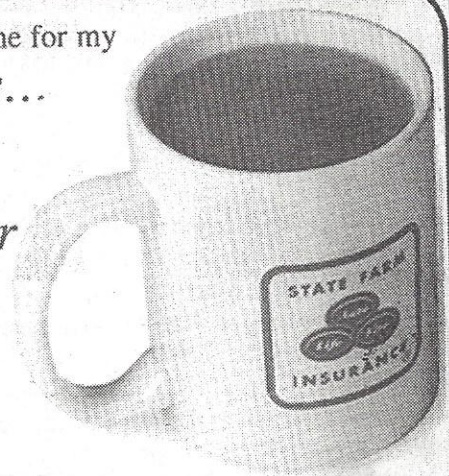
## Cross Country Ski Clinic at St. Patrick's County Park

A Cross Country Ski Clinic: How to Ski Fast, Easy and Cheap will be offered at St. Patrick's County Park on Saturday, Jan. 8, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The clinic is hosted by members of the Grand Rapids Nordic Ski Team for \$5 per person and is not recommended for people under the age of 12. Topics include equipment selection, ski waxing, clothing and gear, safety techniques and training. The clinic will be offered rain or shine, and if snow conditions allow, there will also be a ski lesson for skiers of all experience levels. Registration and payment for the workshop are required by Jan. 5 at 574-654-3155.

### Interesting Tidbits:

- The sloth (a mammal) moves so slowly that green algae can grow undisturbed on its fur.

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