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AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

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Cop pleads not guilty to stealing youth funds

Akron Patrolman Erik W. Keenan resigns over felony theft charge involving Explorers bank account

By Phil Trexler
Beacon Journal staff writer

An Akron police officer who mentored area youths interested in law enforcement has resigned amid felony theft charges.

Patrolman Erik W. Keenan, 34, resigned Thursday after nine years on the department.

On Friday, Keenan pleaded not guilty to a felony charge of theft from the department's Explorers post bank account while serving as the youth group's adviser.

Keenan appeared in Akron Municipal Court and was released on a signature bond.

His attorney, Joseph Gorman, attributed the officer's action to financial stress. Keenan's wife is ill and unable to work, and he was struggling to support her and his children, he said.

Court records show Keenan lost a home to foreclosure in 2008. He earned about \$55,000 a year as an officer.

"He feels bad about the situation," Gorman said. "He made a mistake and he's accepting responsibility by voluntarily resigning his position in an attempt to take ownership of that mistake and move on with his life."

Akron police detectives began investigating

Please see **Police, A5**



Keenan

Personal trainer Jeremy Smith lives in his car after taking drastic measures to reduce his debt. After years of self-imposed homelessness in Akron, he is finally getting his life back into shape



PHIL MASTURZO/Akron Beacon Journal

Personal trainer Jeremy Smith, 39, who has been living in his car in Akron, looks over the few possessions he keeps in storage in Copley Township.

Bodybuilder has inner strength

By Dave Scott
Beacon Journal staff writer

Like many people who reach a crisis, Jeremy Smith knew he needed a change.

But not many people take the drastic measures Smith committed to three years ago when he found himself depressed and nearly friendless, up to his neck in credit-card debt and struggling with his career as a personal trainer.

He sold most of his possessions, gave up his apartment, cut back on his spending and started living in his car.

Essentially, he deliberately became homeless. Through all kinds of weather and more than

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his share of life's ups and downs, Smith has dedicated himself to paying off his bills, refreshing his personal outlook and career and reflecting on how family and personal events left him so desperate.

The 39-year-old says he's making progress, partly because of a positive attitude.

"I guess in dealing with the problem, you have to be honest . . . brutally honest, seeing it as it is and then seeing suddenly you're going to give yourself that freedom of feeling more empow-

ered," he said. "Then coming up with a game plan and saying if it's raining, you can't control the weather but maybe you can grab an umbrella."

There is pain in his life – physical and emotional.

Sleeping in the back seat of his car left him aching in the morning. He solved that by flattening the seat, giving him more room.

After years of separation, he's trying to reconnect with his estranged family in Indiana.

It took courage, but he recently contacted his

Please see **Homeless, A4**

Palin's emails reveal life as governor, mom

Closely involved in running state, she is shown fiercely defending her record, family from gossip

By Becky Bohrer
Associated Press

JUNEAU, ALASKA: As Alaska governor, Sarah Palin struggled with the gossip about her family and marriage.

As newly minted Republican vice presidential nominee, she was dismayed by the sudden onslaught of questions from reporters, especially ones about whether she believed dinosaurs and humans existed at the same time. She also dealt with death threats.

At least once, she prayed for strength. Other times, she fired off messages to her aides, most of them fierce when the subject was defending her record or her family.

The glimpse into Palin came in more than 24,000 pages of emails from her first 21 months as governor. The messages, released Friday, showed a Palin involved closely in the day-to-day business of the state while trying to cope with the increasing pressure that came with her rise from small-town mayor to governor to national prominence.

The emails were packed into six boxes, weighing 250 pounds in all, stacked in a small office in a complex of buildings near the state Capitol in Juneau.

Within minutes of the release, Palin tweeted

Please see **Palin, A5**



Palin



MICHAEL CHRITTON/Akron Beacon Journal

Maintenance supervisor Rich Mest kneels on the newly refinished ice at the Kent State University Ice Arena on Friday. Mest retired Friday after 31 years on the job.

KSU's ice supervisor slides into retirement

After 31 years of maintaining the arena's rinks, colorful moments haven't melted from memory

By Paula Schleis
Beacon Journal staff writer

KENT: It took all week to fill the Kent State University Ice Arena's larger rink for another year of operation.

Armed with only a garden hose, it takes several passes over several days to lay down a 2-inch-thick base on the 200-by-85-foot surface.

Rich Mest said a former boss once calculated that the footsteps involved in the painstaking and primitive technique would carry him from Kent to downtown Akron.

Mest and his crew have made that trip annually for 31 years,

but when the rink was finished Friday, so was Mest.

He retired from a job that was meant only to be temporary, a welcomed paycheck during the recession of 1980.

"Time just sneaks up on you," said Mest, who supervised two full-time staffers and half a dozen part-time student workers.

The Stow resident will take with him memories of pooping penguins, Goodyear tires, raining ceilings, pea-soup fog, bobsledders, brides and the shocked reaction of 21st century arena visitors who couldn't believe the

Please see **Ice, A5**

A few strong thunderstorms; clouds and sun

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