

# THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS



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## Ominous deadline for jobless

UNLESS CONGRESS ACTS, THOUSANDS IN AREA WILL BEGIN TO LOSE BENEFITS MONDAY

BY MONICA SCOTT  
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Jerry Lynn's optimism that he will find a new job has waned steadily since January, when he was laid off from Dekker Bookbinding after 10 years. Now he is worried that he will join a growing group: those who are exhausting their unemployment benefits.

"I have been trying hard to find another job so I can have some stability and not lose my house," said Lynn, who has almost 30 weeks of benefits remaining. "Trying to survive this economy isn't easy when jobs are so hard to come by."

By the year's end, as many as 100,000 Michiganders will be among the 1.4 million Americans who will exhaust their unemployment insurance benefits. Those checks have been keeping many in their homes and food in the fridge. State residents who lost a full-time job receive a maximum of \$362 per week in unemployment benefits, plus \$25 from stimulus money.

Congress already has approved emergency extensions that have permitted laid-off workers in almost half the states — including Michigan — to

"This is a very, very tough situation, and everyone should be sympathetic to people in this situation."

— Rep. Vernon Ehlers

collect benefits for up to 79 weeks. Congress could vote as early as next week on whether to extend benefits another 13 weeks for struggling states such as Michigan, which leads the nation with a 15.2 percent jobless rate.

Without the extension, more than 5,000 residents in Kent and Ottawa counties will run out of benefits between Monday and the first of the year.

U.S. Reps. Vernon Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids, and Pete Hoekstra, R-Holland, said the extension is needed to head off severe troubles for many people, but they understand concerns that it will add to the nation's debt load.

"This is a very, very tough situation, and everyone should be sympathetic to people in this situation," said Ehlers. "I think we should extend benefits for Michigan and other states."

He said the current hardship reminds him of a time in the 1980s when the government, churches and food banks had to help sustain people.

Myndee Menger, of Shelby, said she already is thinking about how she and her husband will support their family of four when she loses her unemployment benefits. Menger, a former lease processor at Western Land Service,

SEE BENEFITS, A6

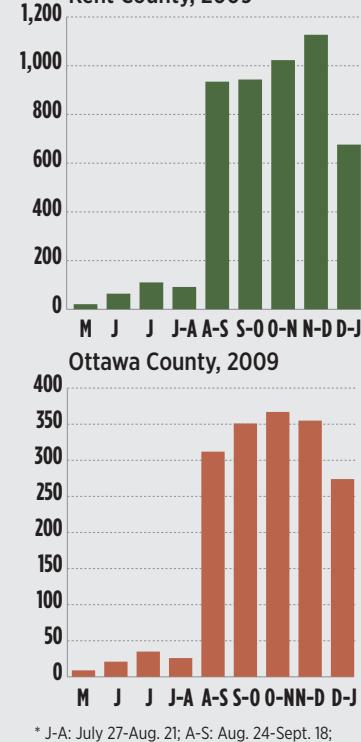


PRESS PHOTO/EMILY ZOLADZ

**Extra time:** Myndee Menger, of Shelby, outside the Unemployment Insurance Agency on Plainfield Avenue NE, has been out of work for six months. She got an extension of benefits just before the deadline.

### Time running out

The number of area residents who will exhaust their unemployment insurance benefits soon will soar unless Congress passes an extension.



\* J-A: July 27-Aug. 21; A-S: Aug. 24-Sept. 18; S-O: Sept. 21-Oct. 16; O-N: Oct. 19-Nov. 13; N-D: Nov. 16-Dec. 11; D-J: Dec. 14-Jan. 8.

SOURCE: Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency

PRESS GRAPHIC

## State's unemployment rate still tops nation

Michigan's rate hits 15.2%; nation's job loss widespread

BY CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Forty-two states lost jobs last month, up from 29 in 2008, with the biggest net payroll cuts coming in Texas, Michigan, Georgia and Ohio.

Michigan saw 42,900 jobs disappear, according to the Labor Department, including 25,000 in manufacturing, as the state continued to suffer along with its struggling auto industry.

The state's unemployment rate rose to 15.2 percent, the highest in the nation. When its jobless rate topped 15 percent in June, it was the first time any state surpassed that mark since 1984.

Most economists project Michigan's jobless rate will continue to rise. The University of Michigan estimates it will average 15.8 percent in 2010.

The Labor Department also reported Friday that 27 states saw their unemployment rates increase in August, and 14 states and Washington, D.C., reported unemployment rates of 10

## SORTING OUT PREP FOOTBALL

Does the cream rise to the top this week, or do upsets scramble the picture? D5-7

## THE GREAT DIVIDER

Mayweather thrives on provoking anger, columnist David Mayo says. D1

## Mother accused of killing disabled daughter

Suspect neglected helpless 21-year-old, prosecutor says

BY JOHN TUNISON  
AND DAVE MURRAY  
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

WYOMING — As an infant, Taryn Elizabeth Jefferson was the victim of a violent shaking that left her developmentally disabled.

At 21, she died after being victimized again — this time at the hands of her mother, prosecutors say.

Taryn died March 7 at her family's Wyoming home. Her mother, 48-year-old Tammy Lee Jefferson, is charged with murder and second-degree vulnerable adult abuse.

If convicted, she faces up to life in prison. She remains in the Kent County Jail on a \$500,000 bond, and her preliminary court hearing is set for Thursday.

"Our position is she neglected the girl and the girl died," Kent County Assistant Prosecutor Chris Becker said. "She was Tammy Lee Jefferson totally dependent on her mother."

"She couldn't live without assistance," Becker said.

Wyoming detectives said the abuse happened between November 2007 and March, when Taryn died. An arrest warrant affidavit filed in court shows detectives allege Jefferson failed to provide the proper care for her daughter, causing Taryn's health to deteriorate to the point of death.

Becker did not specify the exact nature of the abuse. A death certificate listed the manner of Taryn's death as homicide.

Those who knew Taryn described her as a childlike young woman who had severe developmental disabilities. She used a wheelchair and required constant care.

Taryn had been a student at Lincoln School in Grand Rapids. About five years ago she transferred to its neighboring Lincoln Developmental Center, which educates children and young adults with special needs.

But for the past several years, Taryn's attendance at school had been spotty, say those who knew her. Her absences were investigated, with workers going to her home in the 3500 block of Goodman Ave. SW. Court records



Tammy Lee Jefferson

## If you seek a rabbit and a mitten, look about you

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Actually, it kind of does look like a rabbit.

Michigan's Upper Peninsula, that is.

When somebody casually mentioned to artist Alan Carriero that the U.P. looks like a rabbit leaping over a mitten, Carriero had a revelation. And "RABBITMITTEN, USA" was born.

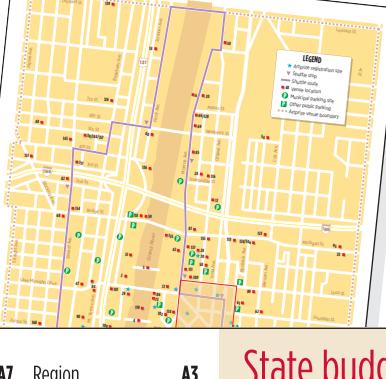
"I had never noticed it," said Carriero, who moved to Grand Rapids from New Jersey.

Carriero plans to install his work, an 8-foot sculpture depicting a rabbit and a mitten in a Michigan configuration, Sunday on the lawn outside The Press headquarters at 155 Michigan St. NW.

His ambitions for the project

go beyond ArtPrize, though. He also plans a line of T-shirts and other souvenirs illustrating the concept. He planned to sell shirts at today's Eastown Street Fair.

Also in the works — a children's book about a rabbit who rules the forest and is so popular the other creatures make him a mitten-shaped land



### MORE

■ Replacement set for artwork lost to fire, A3

■ Sometimes refer to Lower Peninsula-dwellers as "trolls" — as in, people living under the bridge. (You all knew they called us that, right? Crazy.)

mass over which to rule.

He might want to start his marketing in the U.P.,

where residents sometimes refer to Lower Peninsula-dwellers as "trolls" — as in, people living under the bridge. (You all knew they called us that, right? Crazy.)

— Troy Reimink

## COMING SUNDAY

Worried about finding your way around ArtPrize? Look for our guide to the 1,262 entries, including a map and details on voting.



## WHERE AM I?



Seventh in a series: Here is a detail from an ArtPrize entry which, as of Friday, was still a work in progress. A Virginia artist is the sculpture's creator, lots of help was on hand. Can you identify this work? See the answer on A3.



4  
days  
until voting  
begins

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State budget talks go slowly, A3  
Jewish New Year celebrated, C1

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