

# Wege preserves 577 acres in Vergennes Township

by Emma Palova

Conservation easements totaling 577 acres in Vergennes Township have been donated by philanthropist Peter Wege.

The preserved area also known as the Parnell Avenue Corridor has been considered by the residents of Grattan and Vergennes townships as prime farmland.

"Conservation easement is a legal document that restricts the use of the property," said Kendra Wills of MSU Extension.

The easement tailored to each individual property determines whether residential construction should be allowed, hunting and farming practices and other environmental protection factors.

Conservation easements are donated voluntarily to determine the use of the property in the future.

"It's still a private property, unless the donor wants to open it up for public use," said Wills.

To encourage the donation of conservation easements, state and federal tax incentives have been created for qualified donations.

The land conservancy of West Michigan is in charge of monitoring the use of properties.

According to Wills, this has been the single largest donation of land to the conservancy. Together with preserved farmland, there will be 1,044 acres of preserved land within the Parnell Corridor.

"Mr. Wege is well known locally and nation-

ally for his leadership and generosity to environmental causes," said Wills.

It is Wege's hope that other people will do the same thing.

"I take great pleasure in the beauty of this natural, undeveloped land," Wege said. "Now, I know it will be there for the community and generations to come."

The preservation of Wege's property was organized through the United Growth for Kent County land preservation project.

The Parnell Avenue

Corridor was created in 2005 with the preservation of the 106-acre Howard farm through the Purchase of Development Rights program.



This sign along Two Mile Road designates one of several easements donated by Peter Wege.

### Preserved Farmland

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Program

