

BALTIMORE CITY/COUNTY

COUNTY ST

er Catonsville High School on
oomsbury Avenue is treated un-
er the county's Landmarks Pres-
ervation list.

animals, produce, crafts
scheduled at 4-H Fair

TIMONTUM — Animals, pro-
duce and crafts will be featured at
the Maryland State Fairgrounds
Timontum this week as part of
the Baltimore County 4-H Fair.
About 400 4-H members, ages 5
to 18, will exhibit and compete to-
morrow through Sunday. Horses,
sheep, rabbits and dogs are
among the animals scheduled to
appear.

The fair, which is free and open
to the public, runs from 8:30 a.m.
to 10 p.m. tomorrow; from 8 a.m.
to 10 p.m. Friday; from 8:30 a.m. to
10:30 p.m. Saturday; and from 8
a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. Informa-
tion: 410-659-1025.

In Baltimore City

plead guilty 1988 slaying

Two men pleaded guilty to first-
degree murder in city Circuit
court yesterday for the 1988 New
Year's Day slaying of a Baltimore
county man whose body was
found in a car in Leakin Park.

Willie Petty Jr., 36, of Berlin,
Baltimore County, and Jimmie
McKoy, 34, of Baltimore, pleaded
guilty before Judge Clifton J. Gor-
man to slaying Jason A. Ely, 21,
whose body was stuffed into the
trunk of an abandoned Toyota
Cressida that was found in the
500 block of Welberedsville Road.
Police said they believed the slay-
ing was drug-related.

Prosecutors said the men were
charged in October after they con-
fessed. Petty's sister, JoAnn Petty,
36, of the 6800 block of Alter St. in
Baltimore County, is scheduled to
be tried today for first-degree
murder in the slaying.

From staff reports

CE TER

lock of W. Mulberry St.

thern District

stolen vehicle: A 1995 Jeep with
tags 704031M was stolen in the
600 block of Greenberry Road
Monday.

Baltimore County

the Marsh President

workshops violation/injuries:
four teen-agers were sitting on
the back porch of a house in the
1st block of Offspring Court in
Terry Hall about 4:30 p.m. Monday
when one of them lit a fuse
candle. M-30 firecrackers and
dipped it into an empty beer bot-
tle. The blast sent glass splinters
to the faces and hands of the
youths. One was treated at the
Timmer Eye Clinic at Johns Hop-
kins Hospital; the others were less
seriously injured. Charges were
pending.

Indalham: Six tires on an Inter-
national truck were damaged
when the vehicle was parked in the
600 block of Yellow Brick Road
Monday. The tires were valued at
more than \$1,000. In the 100 block
Philadelphia Ave. Monday,
someone broke out the windows of
a Mack truck. The windows were

Dundalk man sues over attempt to adopt his daughter

Couple's lawyers said
father had agreed;
\$7 million sought

By JOAN JACOBSON
SUBSTAFF

A Dundalk truck driver who
temporarily lost custody of his in-
fant daughter to an adoptive cou-
ple filed suit yesterday against the
couple and two prominent adop-
tion lawyers for erroneously telling
a judge he had consented to the
baby's adoption.

The \$7 million negligence and
fraud suit filed by Anthony Covino
Sr. — highly unusual in the field of
adoption law — is the last stage in
his battle with a Montgomery
County couple who tried to adopt
his daughter.

"I went through a living hell
knowing I had a daughter, not
knowing where she was," said Cov-
ino, who saw his daughter only a
few times before her first birthday.
He shares custody of 20-month-old
Sarah Lynn Christina Crowe
Covino with the baby's mother,
who had placed the child for adoption
over his objection.

It is the second case in the na-
tion filed against a lawyer by a par-
ent whose child was placed for
adoption against his wishes, said
Jane Gorman, a California lawyer
and president of the American
Academy of Adoption Attorneys.

In a 1996 West Virginia case, a
jury awarded \$8 million to a man
whose baby was given by the birth
mother to an adoptive couple in
Canada, through a California law-
yer. Although the father won the
case, he never got his baby back.

"Though such cases are rare, I
don't think it's going to be unusu-
al," said the high degree of public
interest by the West Virginia case," said
Gorman.

Covino's case was filed in Super-
ior Court for the District of Col-
umbia, where the attorneys being
sued — Peter Wiernicki and Mark
McDermott — practice law.
McDermott is former president of

"Right now I'm broke, but
I've got everything I need.
I've got my daughter and
my health."

Anthony Covino

the American Academy of Adop-
tion Attorneys.

The suit also names the couple
who had tried to adopt the baby,
Trina and Harris Leonard, of Pot-
tomac. Mr. Leonard declined yester-
day to comment on the suit.
Wiernicki and McDermott did
not return a reporter's calls. Their
lawyer, Paul J. Maloney, said he
would have no comment.

The suit focuses on a petition
the lawyers sent to a Montgomery
County judge two days after the
baby's birth, stating that Covino
had signed a consent agreement to
the adoption when he had not.
Their petition prompted a Mont-
gomery County judge to allow the
Leonards to take temporary cus-
tody of the baby.

The suit accuses the Leonards
and their lawyers of having "kid-
napped" (Covino's) child with a
pen.

Covino, "was for a year, de-
prived of virtually all contact with
his daughter" and was denied the
"joys of fatherhood that all mem-
bers of society take for granted,"
wrote Covino's Towson lawyer,
John J. "Jack" Conduliffe, who filed
the suit with attorney Thomas C.
Valkenet.

Father enraged

When the baby was born Nov.
12, 1996, Covino arrived at Johns
Hopkins Bayview Medical Center
and became enraged on learning
the newborn's mother — his for-
mer girlfriend — was proceeding
with adoption against his wishes,
according to hospital records.

Although Covino had agreed
at least once to the adoption,
he had recanted in later con-
versations with the lawyers and
the baby's mother. He also had
mailed a letter to Wiernicki stating



Enjoying fatherhood: Anthony Covino plays with his 20-month-old daughter Sarah at home. He shares custody of the child with her mother.

that he opposed the adoption.
Montgomery County Circuit
Judge Michael Pincus was told
none of this when he granted the
Leonards temporary custody of
the baby three days after her
birth, according to Covino's law-
yers.

In the days after her birth, Cov-
ino said, he did not know where his
daughter was taken or what court
had given the baby to the adoptive
parents.

Seven months later, after Cov-
ino hired lawyer Judith Stueb-
Conduliffe to find his child, Pincus
dismissed the adoption case and
turned the baby over to her birth
parents, Covino and Kathleen
Crowe.

And in November 1997, shortly
after the child's first birthday, Bal-
timore County Circuit Judge Law-
rence R. Daniels awarded joint
custody to Covino and Crowe.

Just before his ruling, Daniels
also took what he called a "very
unusual" step of writing a letter to
the Montgomery County judge

who had first handled the case,
warning him about "grossly un-
professional conduct" on the part
of McDermott and Wiernicki for
alleging that Covino had consented
to the adoption.

"At best, these allegations
would appear to me to be inaccur-
ate, misleading and extremely
sloppy lawyering; at worst, they
are a fraud on the Court," wrote
Daniels in an Oct. 3, 1997 letter.

"This lapse in professional con-
duct disturbs me greatly," wrote
Daniels, who suggested that
Montgomery County judges "scru-
tinize most carefully" any other le-
gal documents filed by McDermott
and Wiernicki.

He later said he has never be-
fore written such a letter in his ten
years on the bench.

\$30,000 in debt

For Covino, the loss of his
daughter was an emotionally and
financially draining experience.
He said he spent \$14,000 in law-
yers' fees and still owes \$30,000.

"Right now I'm broke, but I've
got everything I need. I've got my
daughter and my health," said
Covino, a recovering alcoholic.

Although Covino said he has
happily settled into the daily rou-
tines of fatherhood, "I still have
nightmares of people running
away with my daughter."

During the time he had lost his
daughter, Covino said, he was see-
ing a therapist for depression and
taking medication for anxiety.

Of the Leonards, who raised his
daughter for most of the first year
of her life, he said, "I feel sorry for
the people, but I'm very angry with
them because they played God.
It's not their baby. I'll never get
that first year back."

Two new leaders working to implement Greater Homewood 'Renaissance' plan

North Baltimore group
has ambitious agenda

By JAMIE STISHAM
SUBSTAFF

On the front of her blue and
white striped seersucker jacket,
Barbara Bonnell sported a button
reading "Future Leaders of Great-
er Homewood" as she and William
F. Miller had lunch in Charles Vil-
lage yesterday.

For Bonnell, 67, and Miller, 58,
the new leaders at the Greater
Homewood Community Corpora-
tion, the future is now.

The duo is taking charge of im-
plementing the group's five-year
master "Renaissance" plan, which
calls for raising \$32 million from



Woman charged with stealing state police car

By DALE WILLES
SUBSTAFF