



TIGERS
SNAP WIN
STREAK

THE TIGERS CLAWED BACK FROM A FIVE-RUN DEFICIT AND BRIEFLY HELD THE LEAD, BUT THE KANSAS CITY ROYALS HAD THE FINAL SURGE IN A 10-8 WIN SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT COMERICA PARK. **B1**

TECHNOLOGY

Need a friend? Teens say
they are turning to AI.



Bruce Perry, 17, demonstrates the possibilities of artificial intelligence by creating an AI companion. Katie Adkins, Associated Press

Youths are increasingly
interacting with artificial
intelligence. “It’s the
new addiction.”

Jocelyn Gecker Associated Press

No question is too small when Kayla Chege, a high school student in Kansas, is using artificial intelligence. The 15-year-old asks ChatGPT for guidance on back-to-school shopping, makeup colors, low-calorie choices at Smoothie King, plus ideas for her Sweet 16 and her younger sister’s birthday party. The sophomore honors student makes a point not to have chatbots do her homework and tries to limit her interactions to mundane questions. But in interviews with The Associated Press and a new study, teenagers say they are increasingly interacting with AI as if it were a companion, capable of providing advice and friendship. “Everyone uses AI for everything now. It’s really taking over,” said Chege, who wonders how AI tools will affect her generation. “I think kids use AI to get out of thinking.” For the past couple of years, concerns about cheating at school have dominated the conversation around kids and AI. But artificial intelligence is playing a much larger role in many of their lives. AI, teens



Perry can also use Character AI, a chatbot software, on his phone. Thirty-one percent of teens say their conversations with AI were “as satisfying or more satisfying” than talking with real friends.

say, has become a go-to source for personal advice, emotional support, everyday decision-making and problem-solving. ‘AI IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE. IT NEVER GETS BORED WITH YOU’ More than 70% of teens have used AI companions and half use them regularly, according to a new study from Common Sense Media, a group that studies and advocates for using screens and digital media sensibly.

The study defines AI companions as platforms designed to serve as “digital friends,” like Character. AI or Replika, which can be customized with specific traits or personalities and can offer emotional support, companionship and conversations that can feel human-like. But popular sites like ChatGPT and Claude, which mainly answer questions, are being used in the same way, the researchers say. As the technology rapidly gets more sophisticated, teenagers and experts worry about AI’s potential to redefine human relationships and exacerbate crises of loneliness and youth mental health. “AI is always available. It never gets bored with you. It’s never judgmental,” says Ganesh Nair, an 18-year-old in Arkansas. “When you’re talking to AI, you are always right. You’re always interesting. You are always emotionally justified.” All that used to be appealing, but as Nair heads to college this fall, he wants to step back from using AI. Nair got spooked after a high school friend who relied on an “AI companion” for heart-to-heart conversations with his girlfriend later had the chatbot write the breakup text ending his two-year relationship. “That felt a little bit dystopian, that a computer generated the end to a real relationship,” said Nair. “It’s almost like we are allowing computers to replace our relationships with people.” SEE TECHNOLOGY, A3

LAWSUIT

Michigan couple
sues resort
company after
prison ordeal

The pair were held in a
maximum-security facility
in Mexico for 32 days over
a timeshare dispute.

Corey Williams Associated Press

DETROIT — A Michigan couple held for 32 days in a maximum-security Mexican prison without trial over a dispute with a luxury timeshare company has filed a lawsuit against the company and its chief executive. Paul and Christy Akeo, of Lansing, allege defamation, malicious prosecution and intentional infliction of emotional distress in the complaint filed this month in Florida. They are seeking unspecified monetary damages and a jury trial. The Akeos say they disputed about \$116,000 in credit card charges after Palace Elite Resorts breached their contract. The credit card companies sided with them and denied the charges for the timeshare in Cancun. According to the lawsuit, which names Palace Elite Resorts and chief executive José Gibrán Chapur Dájer, the company incorrectly claimed that they had fraudulently disputed the charges as “unrecognizable.” The Akeos were arrested March 4 at Cancun International Airport after arriving for a vacation at a different resort. They were accused of fraud, and a judge ordered them detained pending trial, attorney John Manly told The Associated Press in April. They returned home April 3 following negotiations between U.S. and Mexican officials. “The Akeos languished in a maximum security prison in Cancun, Mexico, separate and apart from each other, unable to speak with each other or console one another,” according to the lawsuit which was filed Aug. 15 in Miami-Dade County. “The prison conditions were horrific. The prison was overcrowded with violent criminals, the toilets didn’t flush, and the food SEE LAWSUIT, A3



Christy Akeo speaks on behalf of her daughter, gymnast Lindsey Lemke, during Larry Nassar’s sentencing in 2018. Now Akeo and her husband are suing a resort company after spending a month in a Mexican prison because of a dispute. MLive.com files

FBI warning:
Danger could
be arriving at
your door

A scam tries to artificially
improve product ratings.

Matt Durr mattdurr@mlive.com

The FBI is warning people of a new scam that can lead to data on your phone being stolen. The FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center said the scam involves unsolicited packages being sent to victims across the U.S. The packages include a QR code that prompts the recipient to provide personal and financial information. The code can also cause the victim to unwittingly download malicious software that can lead to data being stolen from the device. “To encourage the victim to scan the QR code, the criminals often ship the packages

without sender information to entice the victim to scan the QR code,” an FBI warning reads. “While this scam is not as widespread as other fraud schemes, the public should be aware of this criminal activity.” The scam is a form of “brushing” used by online vendors to artificially improve the ratings of their products. In a brushing scam, vendors send merchandise to an unsolicited recipient and then use the recipient’s information to post a positive review of the product, the FBI says. In the latest version, the QR codes can also allow the criminal to facilitate financial fraud activities. To combat the scam, people should:

- > Beware of unsolicited packages containing merchandise you did not order.
- > Beware of packages that do not include sender information.
- > Take precautions before authorizing phone permissions and access to websites and applications.
- > Avoid scanning QR codes from unknown origins.
- If you believe you are the target of a brushing scam, secure your online presence by changing account profiles and request a free credit report from one or all the national credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) to identify possible fraudulent activity.

