

# Farmington Observer & Eccentric

## State fines district in student death

By RON GARRINSKI  
East Junior High School has been cited by the Michigan Department of Labor for 25 violations of the state's Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Included in the list of citations mailed to the Farmington School District last week were three violations that apparently resulted in the Jan. 9 electrocution death of Robert Kourjian, a 13-year-old student at East Junior High School.

"As a result of the three-day investigation by the Labor Department, the Farmington District will be fined \$386. The district also will be required to correct all violations in the school's shop area and cafeteria by March 23 or face further fines and a cease to operate order," said William Sebring, deputy director of the Bureau of Safety and Regulation.

THE DEPARTMENT ISSUED the citations under provisions of Act 134 which gives the department jurisdiction over workers employed by a business. The department does not have direct jurisdiction over students.

Sebring said he did not know of any state law that set safety standards for shop equipment used by students in school. But since shop instructors and other teachers working in schools are considered employees of the district, the department is able to exercise its authority in this incident and require the school system to correct the violations by March 23.

According to Sebring, the inspector handling the investigation reported that Kourjian was electrocuted when he attempted to shut off the defective metal buffer. A short circuit developed when the youth tried to pull the ungrounded machine's plug from an extension cord.

The buffer machine was plugged into a receptacle housed in a metal box at the end of the extension cord. Sebring said the wires inside this box were forced loose, creating the short circuit.

Sebring said the inspector reported that the youth completed an electrical circuit when he put one hand on the extension cord's metal box and his other on the faulty machine.

The buffer itself was not grounded with either the usual three-prong plug or metal conduit. The electrical wires had not properly secured at the metal box and the on-off switch on the machine was removed.

The deputy director also said the extension cord should have had a clamp that would have prevented the wires inside the metal box from pulling loose from their connection.

Sebring cited these violations as circumstances which led to Kourjian's death. WHILE THE EAST SHOP area remains open for class Lewis Schulman, assistant superintendent of secondary schools last week said that most of the safety violations were corrected after a thorough inspection of the shop by an independent engineering firm.

After the electrocution, S.F. Sank Associates of Novi checked the shop area, making sure defective equipment was removed or improved, Schulman said.

Meanwhile, the Farmington Hills Public Safety Department still is reviewing an investigation into the electrocution. A department spokesman Tuesday wouldn't comment on the department's report. He did say, however, its report may be completed by next week.

The citations issued by the Labor Department do not prohibit the district from using the cited equipment. But should it fail to comply with the March 23 deadline, the Bureau of Safety and Regulation then has the authority to issue a cease to operate order and assess further fines. Sebring added.

The school district has 15 days to appeal the fines and abatement dates.

The Labor Department cited several other violations in the shop area and cafeteria. Violations that are to be corrected by Feb. 6 dealt with violations of electrical standards.

THE BUREAU'S INSPECTOR found ungrounded electrical equipment and equipment without proper switches or protective guards.

Other defects in small hand tools, such as cracked hammer heads and chisel and files without handles were included in the list of violations.

A meat cutter in the cafeteria was also cited as being defective.

At least one power hand tool had its switch removed and wired in the open position. Sebring said this tool had to be plugged directly into the wall outlet to be turned on.

Another grinding wheel in the shop also was without a protective faceguard.

Violations listed in the Feb. 23 abatement date included improper storage of containers filled with flammable solvents, improper labeling of solvents, the absence of a proper fire extinguisher in the shop, and failure to provide adequate eye protection for maintenance personnel.

Lower violations to be corrected by March 23 were those in which materials have to be special ordered, such as a guard for the shop's table saw. Sebring said.

The deputy director said there was an above average number of violations cited in the department's report. While many of the infractions were not uncommon in other shop areas, they were serious violations and careless oversight by school personnel, he said.



Sleepy but safe, the Peans twins of Farmington, Angela (left) and Rebecca, relax in their newly acquired Infant Love Seats. The Jaycettes safety program, Buckle Up Babies, BUBS, offered the use of the seats for as long as needed to the first Farmington baby born during BUBS Week, Jan. 5-11. The Peans twins, born Jan. 8, went four hands down. Their mother, Linda Peans, says

they are very good babies and she intends to make use of the new safety seats. The Jaycettes started their campaign to rent the seats and the demand quickly outdistanced the supply. Mrs. Harriet Reed, project chairman, says 51 are now in use in the area. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

## Hires private firm

## Hills contracts rescue service

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington Hills residents will have a full-time human rescue service available beginning next month.

That's the decision of the Hills council, which this week agreed to enter into a contract with the privately owned Farmington Hills Ambulance Company. The exclusive service will run until the end of the fiscal year in June.

The council will reassess the program at that time to determine whether it should continue the contracted service. It will cost the city \$2,000 a month.

The agreement was made after city leaders learned the ambulance company was considering moving out of the city completely. The company has been losing \$2,000 a month since last June in Farmington Hills, according to its owner, Barry Slobin.



Harry Nickels, Farmington Hills resident, was named the outstanding young educator last week by the Livonia Jaycees. He is a psychology teacher at Stevenson High in Livonia. He is showing a plaque awarded to him by the Jaycees. (Staff photo)

## Park guidelines study launched

By STEVE BARNABY  
Development of a parks system for Farmington Hills is once again in the limelight.

In a 6-1 vote, the council approved a study by professional planners to outline park needs for the city. Voting against the motion was Councilman Keith Deacon, who said the motion defied the mandate of a referendum vote taken last November.

"All we're doing is seeing what the pros tell us is the best," she said. Dudley, a Farmington area recreation commissioner, originally asking for the study.

"We could provide a better service for the city if we entered some sort of contract," he said. Presently, the company serves Livonia, Redford Township and Franklin, as well as the Hills. Although continuing to serve these other communities, the Hills will be the only city with an exclusive contract.

### Top teacher

Harry Nickels, Farmington Hills resident, was named the outstanding young educator last week by the Livonia Jaycees. He is a psychology teacher at Stevenson High in Livonia. He is showing a plaque awarded to him by the Jaycees. (Staff photo)

In a 5-1 vote, the council approved a study by professional planners to outline park needs for the city. Voting against the motion was Councilman Keith Deacon, who said the motion defied the mandate of a referendum vote taken last November.

"We have considered funds from the unappropriated surplus. There are funds available. It is just a matter of priorities," he said. A CUBSBO also exists, he said, in the city manager's account of the budget, but he warned that other accounts could be overpaid.

"Hopefully, we have the ability to balance out the budget so that it will balance at the end of the year," he said. Before last November's election, the Farmington Area Recreation Commission endorsed the combination parks system.

McConnell backed off from his original motion and made a new motion which included study of all types of parks. Neighborhood parks, to be built when school facilities were inadequate, would be designed primarily for children under 14 years old. They would be built on a minimum of eight acres.

Harry Nickels, Farmington Hills resident, was named the outstanding young educator last week by the Livonia Jaycees. He is a psychology teacher at Stevenson High in Livonia. He is showing a plaque awarded to him by the Jaycees. (Staff photo)

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## Farmington grad honored for work

Harry Nickels of Farmington Hills resident was named the outstanding young educator last week by the Livonia Jaycees to receive the Young Educator Award. Nickels, a 1968 graduate of North Farmington High School, has been teaching at Stevenson High School in Livonia since he began his teaching career in 1968. He has taught U.S. History, geography and government. He now is teaching psychology. Selected by the Jaycees from 11 nominees, Nickels is active in both the school and the general communities. A familiar face at football, hockey and basketball games, Nickels is sponsor for the "Rock Jocks" at the school and works for school board and millage elections in the community. Nickels explained how he felt about his

career. "I feel that, as a teacher, my most important concern is the student. I feel that we as teachers, play a very important role not only in trying to develop and improve the lives and minds of our students, but also in building a better nation." Dorothy Bendley, who signed Nickels nomination, said she described his willingness to participate in school activities. "He is the first to volunteer; he is the first to arrive and the last to leave. He is totally cooperative and will assist anyone in any situation." Nickels received his bachelor's degree in social science from Michigan State in 1968 and completed his master's work and received his degree in guidance and personnel from the same school in 1972.

DEBATE OVER the study broke out after Councilman Bob McConnell made a motion to conduct a study on the concept of small neighborhood parks. Keith supported that motion.

"I think a complete feasibility study should include more than neighborhood parks," said newly elected Councilmember Joanne Smith.

"The vote didn't show that residents supported small neighborhood parks. A lot of them didn't even mark the area on the ballot concerning the parks question," she said.

Councilmember Joan Dudley supported Smith's contention, saying that even fewer residents understood what the parks question was all about.

"Before the election we had two hearings. There were 15 persons who attended. I can only say there are 15 people in this community who know for sure," she said. "I must say that we haven't been clearly directed," she concluded.

"I hope, we have the ability to balance out the budget so that it will balance at the end of the year," he said. Before last November's election, the Farmington Area Recreation Commission endorsed the combination parks system. McConnell backed off from his original motion and made a new motion which included study of all types of parks. Neighborhood parks, to be built when school facilities were inadequate, would be designed primarily for children under 14 years old. They would be built on a minimum of eight acres.

A districtwide park is a park serving the needs of a total community with a population of 50,000 to 100,000. Its location would be close to the center of the population. The recreation commission recommended a site between 30 and 100 acres.