

# Farmington Observer

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## Full-time fire chief resigns after year of internal strife

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

Claiming his authority has been undermined, Farmington Hills Acting Fire Chief Tom Johnson has resigned. "Conditions are such that the authority of the fire chief has been usurped by

es of the "tail wagging the dog" when it came to making decisions about fire operations. "I wouldn't want to name specific incidents. But the department should be run for the good of the citizens, not for the good of those who make money providing fire protection," he said.

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— Acting Chief Tom Johnson

to the extent that the department can't be effectively administered in the manner citizens expect and deserve," he told City Manager Larry Savage in his resignation letter.

Johnson will stay with the department until April or until a new fire chief is hired, he said. He became fire chief last March after the resignation of former chief John Van de Voort.

Although refusing to be specific, Johnson said there were too many cas-

es of the "tail wagging the dog" when it came to making decisions about fire operations. "I wouldn't want to name specific incidents. But the department should be run for the good of the citizens, not for the good of those who make money providing fire protection," he said.

Johnson defended his action saying his position had been undermined by paid callbacks who don't represent the full department.

In a more recent incident Johnson wanted to suspend a volunteer who was charged with "disrespect to a superior officer and vulgar and obscene language."

But after a conference between Johnson and Savage, the suspension was withdrawn. Instead the volunteer was demoted from captain to firefighter after a hearing before the board of fire chiefs. He also was placed on probation.

"That decision was to my satisfaction," said Johnson, although he admitted the incident was a contributing factor to his deciding to resign.

"My resignation was discussed much prior to that incident," he said.

Johnson had another run-in with the

volunteers were disciplined for appearing before city council during a budget hearing.

"I was abhorred to hear these men are on probation because of their appearance," said Opperthauser at the time.

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volunteers over the status of the emergency medical service. He sided with the eight full-time firefighters who campaigned for a municipal emergency medical service.

FARMINGTON HILLS presently is serviced by a privately operated emergency service.

Council rejected putting a question on the ballot last August asking voters which type of service they wished. Again it was volunteers who opposed the municipal service.

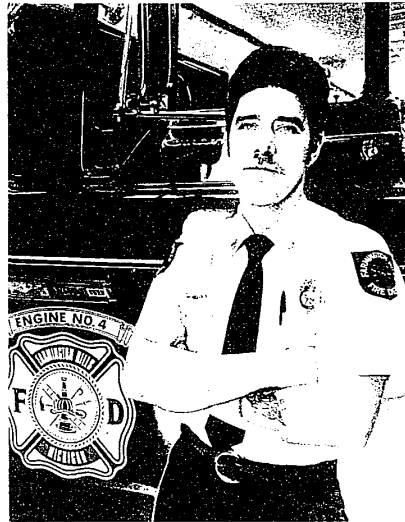
Savage admits the situation within the department is at low ebb. "We've got a morale problem with the relationship between the paid callbacks and the full-timers," he said.

He hopes to get the differences straightened out before a new chief is hired.

"I'm fearful if we don't have them ironed out, a new chief won't make any difference," he said.

Although unhappy with the conduct of some of the volunteers, Johnson said "ninety-five percent of the paid callbacks are doing a hell of a job."

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Acting Chief Tom Johnson in Station Four, Drake 11 Mile. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Now there's free services for area residents

### Health classes planned

Free health education for consumers is the focus of a new department at Botsford General Hospital.

The month-old department already responsible for re-educating some diabetics is picking up steam with an enthusiastic nurse coordinator.

Coordinator Shoula Stefos is planning courses dealing with high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, expectant parents and exposing rip-off health schemes targeted at senior citizens.

"What's special about our program is that no hospitals in this area are offering free education classes," she said.

"Lots of (hospital) programs just drop the participants after two sessions. It doesn't change their behavior in dealing with chronic disease."

While that approach might help other hospitals' public relations image, its speciality is short-ranging participation, according to Stefos.

She plans to follow up with participants for two years with phone calls, new information and newsletters.

"We are really evaluating the programs," Stefos said. "We want to do some good, to impact lifestyles."

"We have the time, the resources and administrative support for a quality program."

Stefos used to have other responsibilities in the hospital and teach classes part-time. Now it's her full-time endeavor.

THERE AREN'T ANY financial or residency requirements for participation in the courses, which are open to anyone.

Wednesday, March 4, a new series of classes for diabetics is being offered. Two-hour sessions will run Wednesdays for five consecutive weeks.

Self-management, meal planning, acceptance, complications and exercise will be discussed. Films and at least one classroom lecturer, a clinical dietitian, are outlined on the syllabus.

A class is planned for 7:30 p.m. but a day class will be scheduled if demand arises.

The classes will treat participants as health care consumers, not as helpless patients.

"That's a new twist for most people," Stefos said. "We stress that the ballgame is in their hands."

Adds Russ Tuttle, hospital spokesman: "We want the community to know we're an asset. We can be used as a resource. You don't just come here to help, you get your appendix out."

All classes will deal with the latest research data, sharing problems with others in the same situation and keeping a positive attitude.

High blood pressure is the next priority for a class. It's one of the nation's top killers.

"The problem is that there are no symptoms," Stefos said.

OFTEN THE LACK of symptoms can lead high blood pressure sufferers to kidney failure, heart disease or stroke. Persons in high stress jobs are more prone to high blood pressure.

Plans are underway to contact professionals in high stress jobs in the Farmington area making them aware of the Botsford health courses.

Stefos earned a nursing degree at Mercy College in Detroit and is currently working on a master's degree in health education at the University of Michigan.

She'll be teaching the courses. As soon as the program expands, so will her department.

Persons interested in registering for courses should call Stefos or her secretary, Susan Lockey, at 476-1927 or 476-7600, ext. 221 or 222.

### Tax assistance available

By MARY GNIEWEK

Senior citizens scratching their heads over a myriad of tax forms to be filed this year should pack up their statements and head for Mercy Center of Farmington Hills.

The center, on 11 Mile east of Middlebelt, is in its fifth year of helping persons with tax questions fill out their forms free of charge.

"The forms are confusing for people without training. It's just a big pile of confusion," said Joseph Anderson, tax coordinator.

Anderson, retired from Western Union where he spent 44½ years as an

accountant, has been with the Mercy program since the beginning.

This year the staff numbers 10. Each received four days of training (three from the Internal Revenue Service, one from the state) before doing battle with the forms.

So far, 158 seniors have been helped. "We'll probably see 1,000 before we're finished," Anderson said.

MAINLY THE PROGRAM is for senior citizens, but Anderson says he wouldn't turn down anyone with a tax question. Persons come for help from Westland, Garden City and Livonia as well as the Farmington area.

There's no income maximum level either. No one who seeks help will be turned down.

The tax service will run daily through March at Mercy, Monday into April. No appointment is necessary.

Persons are treated on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Bring a copy of last year's return, copies of Form 1099 from bank and dividend earnings, amount of Social Security or railroad retirement benefits, and statement of any other income.

The staff is paid for mileage and expenses, but receives no income.

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SHOULA STEFOS

## Former city DPW chief dies

David L. Jones moved into the newly completed Brashear Senior Citizens Tower on Newburgh and Six Mile last

month and according to his wife, Rosemary, "was loving every minute of it."

"He would sit and look out and enjoy the view for hours," said Mrs. Jones.

Mr. Jones, 65, died of a heart attack in St. Mary's Hospital Tuesday morning. He enjoyed a long and varied public service career in both Livonia and Farmington.

Mr. Jones served on Livonia City Council from 1954-58. He worked as assistant director of public works in Livonia from 1952-70. During that same period he was a member of the Water and Sewer Commission and was president of the housing commission.

In 1970, Mr. Jones was appointed director of public works in Farmington, a position he held for the next 7½ years, until he retired in 1977.

Mr. Jones spent 58 years in Livonia. His family lived on Furlingbrook Street. He and his wife later owned a home on Sunset Avenue.

A member of the American Legion Chapter 435 in Farmington, Mr. Jones served in the Marines in Tinian, China. Before beginning his public service career, Mrs. Jones was a bricklayer. He was a member of Local No. 2 of the Bricklayers Union for 37 years.

After retiring, Mr. Jones and his wife moved to Canton Township and traveled to Florida and Las Vegas. He suffered a heart attack in November 1979. He also spent time playing trombone for the Canton Senior Citizens Band.

Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. Saturday in the Heenev-Sundquist Funeral Home, 23720 Farmington Road, Farmington. Visitation will be from 2-9 p.m. today and from 1-9 p.m. Friday. Burial will be in Parkview Cemetery in Livonia.

Survivors include wife, Rosemary; children, Richard of Livonia and Judith Ann of Southfield; brothers, John of Oregon, Hugh of Livonia and Arthur.

The family requests contributions to the Michigan Heart Fund.



Joseph Anderson (left) helps Farmington Hills resident Dorothy Manning prepare her tax return. J. Neil McNabbay assists. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Child eludes stranger

A 6-year-old girl waiting for a school bus at Shawwassee and Haynes last Friday was accosted by a man in a black car.

The child, who lives on Cora, told Farmington Hills police that the man asked her if she wanted a ride to school.

When she declined his offer, he got out of the car and began chasing her.

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### what's inside

**Hats Off**

Observer's Eccentric Classifieds really work! I sold 5 cars -- each one with my first ad!

Thank you, Donald Bostone for telling us of your success with O&E Classifieds!

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DAVID L. JONES