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Behind jobless statistics are tales of struggles

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

John Ardito of Farmington Hills was able to support his family until October when he was injured on the job at a metallurgical-processing company in Warren.

As sometimes happened at the heat-treating facility, a chain bolt broke, and Ardito lifted and moved a heavy basket of auto parts himself.

He ruptured a disc in his back and has been unable to work since. With a weekly disability check of \$142.47, it's impossible to make ends meet and still feed his wife and five children.

"You get behind on your bills when you're paying over \$100 a week just on groceries," he said.

"At some stores, you can get chicken and hamburger on sale, and we buy a lot of spaghetti. But the food economy is getting out of hand."

The Arditos received a five-pound box of cheese from St. Alexander's Catholic Church, before John's hospital stay in November, which helped.

"When there was nothing else, at least you could make a cheese sandwich. But when you have five children, that goes fast," said Ardito, whose oldest child is 22 years old and has Down's Syndrome. The other Ardito children are 20, 17, 15 and 12.

There are now 2,425 unemployed persons among Farmington Hills' 58,056 residents. Multiplied by an average of four family members, the figure translates to 9,700 persons who are liv-

ing on unemployment benefits, said Capt. Russ Conway of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

Among Farmington's 11,022 residents, 825 are unemployed, meaning 3,300 residents are being supported by unemployment benefits.

Close to 500 Farmington-area families are receiving food stamps, while 339 families qualify for ADC, 333 for supplemental security income, 385 for

medical assistance and 80 for general assistance, Conway said. Local food programs are underway at many area churches, the Auto Club's Farmington division, and at Farmington Hills City Hall. Non-perishable canned and boxed goods are being accepted from donors.

Nearly 50 bags of food were distributed last week by Farmington Hills officials, who will notify persons on their

waiting list when additional food supplies are received.

Those interested in the program may call Director of Special Services Douglas Gaylor at 474-6115, Ext. 277.

THE BAKER FAMILY of Farmington Hills also finds itself in tough economic straits. Since Wilson Baker, 37, was laid off three years ago from his truck-driving job for a local asphalt

company, he's been unable to find more than a temporary job.

"He's looked at anything. He's worked at gas stations, at a shop lifting boxes — his last job was in Wilson driving a truck delivering things. We thought we were going to make it, but after one week on the job they said, 'sorry, we don't have enough work for you,'" said Wanda Baker, mother of

four children who range in age from 2 to 9.

What hurts her most is that "people look down on you." What scares Baker is the future.

"I'm worried about five to 10 years from now. You know everything's getting cut, and I'm afraid we're going to get kicked off welfare," said Baker, who works as a waitress for minimum wage at a local senior-citizen's home.

The Baker children are getting old enough to know where the family's money comes from, and it's "spooky to see them playing," she said.

"They pretend their checks are coming in the mail, and that they're buying groceries with food stamps. It's not a good environment for them to be growing up thinking everything is given to you," said Baker, who stretches groceries as far as possible and serves "lots of soup and sandwiches."

Church food programs have been helpful to both the Arditos and Wilsons.

"We got a bag of canned goods yesterday from St. Gerards Catholic Church," Ardito said.

"They're giving out canned goods and \$15 food orders to families, but canned goods don't fill up a person. They can't give you meat, and \$15 a month doesn't go very far with a large family," said Ardito who is unable to collect workmen's or unemployment compensation.

At the end of the month, the Wilsons "really have to scrape. We were calling St. Alexander's every month," said Baker.

Business faith declines in Reagan

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

A national Gallup Survey published in conjunction with the Wall Street Journal shows American executives' confidence in President Ronald Reagan's economic policy is plummeting. Locally, the chief executive gets mixed reviews from the business community.

Survey results released last week show 27 percent of the nation's executives at the 200 largest companies on the Fortune 500 list have "a great deal of confidence" in Reagan to do or recommend the right steps to improve the economy.

In an identical survey, conducted in December of 1981, 58 percent of the nation's top executives polled expressed a great deal of confidence in the president's economic program. By

'He's got to balance the budget. Whatever it takes. If it means cutting \$100 billion out of the defense budget, I'd do it. If it means raising taxes, I'd do it.'

—James Wibby
bank president

April of '82 the confidence level dipped to 44 percent and now stands at 27 percent.

On another question, heads of large companies generally predict 1983 will be a better year than 1982 but not nearly as many are as optimistic about an upturn as they were last year. Last year 56 percent of 310 respon-

dents randomly selected from the Fortune magazine list of the nation's 1,300 largest companies predicted an improved economy for 1982.

This year 46 percent of the executives think this year will be better than last. Another 29 percent predict a moderate improvement and 5 percent predict that the recession, or depres-

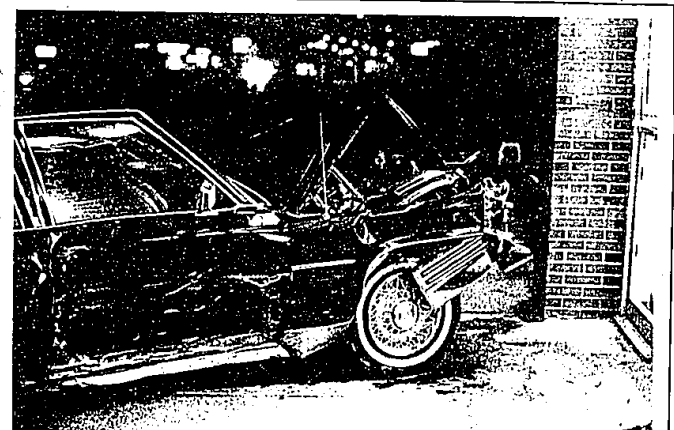
sion, will worsen in 1983.

JAMES WIBBY, president of Metropolitan Bank of Farmington, said the president has betrayed conservatives by spending more than his predecessors even if it is for defense instead of social programs.

"I've felt for a long time they were somewhat out of control in Washington, particularly in failing to bring spending back in line," Wibby said. "But I think Reagan could've taken an even more conservative approach. He cut taxes more than he should have and shifted spending to other areas."

While the rate of inflation has slowed considerably, Wibby said, the price the nation is paying can be seen in the record number of unemployed and in

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STEVE DARNABY/staff photographer

Surprise visitor

This was the rush-hour scene in front of Romano's Pizzeria last week as the Cadillac (above) ran into the building along Grand River after colliding with the Charger (right). The rush-hour accident at the Nine Mile intersection left traffic piled up for a quarter mile each way.



Visitor rams Romano's

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Customers picking up pizzas at Romano's Pizzeria in Farmington narrowly escaped injury Thursday evening when a car slammed into the building just inches from the door.

Driver of the car, Linda Glover, 42, of Nashville, Tenn., lost control of her vehicle after colliding with another car at the intersection of Grand River and Nine Mile at 5:05 p.m. Police ticketed Glover for failing to stop at a red light, causing a hazardous condition leading to the accident.

The driver of the second car, was identified by police as Annette Jacoboni, 32, of Livonia. Neither woman

was transported to the hospital for treatment but Glover told police she was experiencing some pain.

Witness Gary Wales of Northville said he was two cars behind Jacoboni on southbound Nine Mile, where the road turns into Orchard Lake Road, and saw the Cadillac go through a light on Grand River "a couple seconds after it turned red."

"The woman in the Charger started up on the green and got nailed," Wales said.

After scraping alongside the right front of the Charger, Wales said, the Cadillac spun the smaller car completely around. Glover's car continued west for a short distance, straddling the curb, before jumping it. The car

struck the brick that separates the front door of the pizzeria from the front door of a decorating shop next door named Interiors by Frederick. Glover's vision was obscured by a broken windshield and a crumpled hood on her car.

DELIVERY MAN at the pizzeria, Brian Goodman, said he was just about to walk out the front door with an order when Glover hit the building.

"It kind of looked like she'd come through the front door," he said, "but she bounced back." The accident occurred during the dinner hour just before nightfall and minutes before the snow started falling.

Holiday accident rate lowest in many years

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Drivers shattered some well-established records this past New Year's Eve weekend, as traffic fatalities plummeted from the average of 17 statewide to only 5, according to Bruce Madsen, managing director of the Traffic Improvement Association.

For the first time Farmington Lt. Frank Lauboff can remember, there were zero roadway accidents in Farmington during the New Year's holiday weekend.

In Farmington Hills, four accidents were reported, and only one of them was alcohol related, said Farmington

Hills Lt. Ernest Miller.

Madsen's count excludes accidents that occurred between noon and midnight January 2, but says that "unless something unusual happened, it was one of the lowest New Year's Eve weekends in terms of fatalities in quite a number of years."

Michigan's traffic death toll has been as high as 21 and as low as seven during the holiday weekend in recent years.

Dry weather, the poor economy (which saw more than the usual number of people staying home) and publicity about the recently stricter drunk driving laws were factors contributing to the low accident rate, said

Drunk law success depends on courts, say police officials

Michigan's new stricter drunk driving laws are due to take effect in three months. Local law enforcement officials have adopted a "wait and see" attitude about their effectiveness in combating the problem that each day kills more than 70 Americans.

Farmington Hills Lt. Ernest Miller and Farmington Lt. Frank Lauboff said a lot will depend on whether the court system follows through.

"I'll be interested to see after the first year how the courts handle it. If they handle it the way they're supposed to and persons are convicted as charged, then we may see a reduction (in the incidence of drunk driving) in five years," said Miller.

"But if first offenders are allowed to plea bargain down to charges that aren't even alcohol related, I doubt we will."

Among the laws' key provisions are:

- Preliminary breath tests to be administered on site by police officers.
- A blood-alcohol concentration of .10 or more will constitute "a new crime per se." The prosecution will no longer have to prove that the offender was drunk or incapable of driving. A level of .10 or higher will be proof in itself.
- An increased penalty for refusal to take the breath test from the present 90-day license suspension to a 180-day suspension plus six points.
- A new \$25 fee will be charged for reinstatement of a suspended license (the service is now free).
- For second offenders, licenses will be revoked for at least a year. Now, licenses may be suspended for up to two years and restricted licenses are allowed. Third offenders under the revised laws may be convicted of a felony and have their license revoked for

up to five years.

- Operating while impaired, which now draws no suspension, will carry license suspensions for first and second offenders. For third offenders, licenses will be revoked for at least one year.

THE CERTAINTY of arrest for drunk drivers seems to be a much greater deterrent than do severe penalties, according to a University of New York study, said Bruce Madsen, managing director of the Traffic Improvement Association.

Miller agrees. "Statutes are always brought in with understanding that they're good, and with the hope that they'll work. The un-

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