

Happy New Year from the Observer staff



Equity or not, 1B

Tips for a safer shopping trip, 3A

Farmington Observer

Volume 98 Number 24

Monday, December 29, 1986

Farmington, Michigan

28 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Farmington FOCUS

If you have a news item, feature story idea or an action picture with a Farmington area connection, send a note to our downtown office at 3263 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

IT'S honored. Farmington Hills' San Marino Golf Course and Recreational Maintenance Center has received an Award of Merit.

The Park Maintenance and Grounds Management magazine bestowed the honor in an annual national contest to encourage efficient and attractive designs of shelters, restrooms, swimming pools and maintenance buildings.

Farmington Hills' maintenance center — designed for optimal energy and maximum use of space — is adjacent to San Marino Golf Course.

Completed in March 1985, the 6,000-square-foot building houses large vehicles, seed, fertilizer, mowers and recreation programming equipment.

Jon Maddern, golf course and parks maintenance superintendent, attended the National Institute of Parks and Grounds Maintenance Services banquet in Louisville, Ky., to accept a plaque on behalf of Farmington Hills' Department of Special Services.

KNOW what's up. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 includes both good and bad news for people with disabilities.

These changes are summarized in a brochure available from the Easter Seal Society of Oakland County.

For a free copy, write the Easter Seal Society: 1105 N. Telegraph, Pontiac 48053. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

CALL it a work sled. And it'll be used by the Department of Special Services to maintain the cross country ski trails at Heritage Park.

Farmington Hills City Council has authorized the purchase of a work sled from Byrne Marine of Dearborn at a cost of \$5,650.

CHANGING days. The Farmington Board of Education will not meet Tuesday, Jan. 6, as regularly scheduled.

Trustees instead will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13, in the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, Farmington.

DRUG hotline. Straight Inc. of Michigan, a non-profit drug treatment program, is now operating a free 24-hour drug helpline at 453-2610. Trained drug abuse counselors are on duty around the clock.

The new service is designed to treat chemically dependent young people ages 12-22 and their families.

KEEP these numbers handy for reference when calling the Farmington Observer: news line, 477-6450; sports line, 591-2312; home delivery, 591-0500; classified ads, 591-0900; display ads, 591-2300.

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — Nine mercury-type water meters in Farmington Hills will be the first to receive retrofits, adding them of all mercury measuring devices, according to local officials.

Mental illness gains exposure

By Casey Hahn
staff writer

Mental illness — one of this country's largest health problems — has been locked away in the closet for years. Local support group leaders said.

There was a time when society wanted to throw away the key, but one leader said times are changing. Doors are now opening as communities begin to understand the

vastness of the problem, said Hank Spitzig, president of the State Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Michigan.

His statewide organization, with 17 local affiliate groups, is also linked to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. Groups from the national level to the grass-roots focus are lobbying and educating to help the national population understand. "Support is coming," said Spitzig, a Livonia resident. "People are willing

to talk about it . . . to come out and work. I think it's changing."

Current research shows mental illness develops when a chemical imbalance occurs in the brain. It can occur at any age. Researchers have yet to find out why. "The brain is like any other organ — when it's sick, it has to be treated," Spitzig said.

THE PROBLEMS of the mentally ill were spotlighted recently in

Farmington Hills when neighbors protested the planned opening of a group home for six mentally ill people in a house on Grayling Street on the city's southeast side.

Following several informational meetings between the neighbors and city and state officials, the home is scheduled to be opened — possibly as soon as mid-January. The Grayling Street site is the

'Support is coming. People are willing to talk about it (Mental illness) . . .'

— Hank Spitzig, president State Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Michigan

Please turn to Page 4

Ex-wife allowed to testify — judge

By Casey Hahn
staff writer

Jailed without bond and charged with the 1985 murder of his second wife, John Allen Vermuelen will face the start of his long-awaited trial Feb. 17 in Oakland County Circuit Court.

He also will face testimony from his first wife — despite a defense motion claiming she should not be allowed to testify under the state's spousal, or marital, privilege statute.

Oakland County Circuit Judge Fred Mester ruled Dec. 5 that the century-old statute did not apply in this case because the marriage had "no viability" and "had long ceased to exist," according to information in court files.

Vermuelen threatened to kill Urme Lewis, his second wife, several weeks before her December 1985 death — a threat he related to his first wife of 21 years, Sharon Vermuelen, while they were still married, court records said. Prosecutors plan to use the threat as "an admission."

HE WAS divorcing Sharon Vermuelen, but was actually married to both women for several weeks before Lewis died. His divorce to Sharon Vermuelen was not final until February of this year.

Vermuelen and Lewis were living at Mirwood Apartments in Farmington Hills when she was fatally shot and he was gravely wounded in a double shooting on Dec. 16, 1985. Vermuelen is charged with Lewis' death. Lewis had recently moved her belongings from the apartment, according to district court testimony from the preliminary examination.

"The marriage relationship of John and Sharon Vermuelen had no viability," Mester said in his opinion. "Essentially the marital relationship had long ceased to exist. Thus, statements made by the defendant to his first wife, Sharon, concerning his intentions on the life of his second wife, Urme, were and are not confidential."

Traditionally, the Husband-wife Privileged Communication statute would bar Sharon Vermuelen from testifying against John Vermuelen unless consent is given by both parties. "The privilege . . . puts an umbrella of protection over an existing

Please turn to Page 4



Dick Osgood works in his study, filled with many of the awards he has amassed throughout his long career in stage, radio and television. The Emmy on the right is the 1985 Governors Award, presented by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Detroit Chapter last spring.

Spotlight has tracked his career

By Loraine McCliah
staff writer

The voice is clear and strong and bellies its 60 years. It is recognizable even before you've connected it up with the name of Dick Osgood.

The actor and writer started his career on a Boston stage in 1920 and has never stopped working. He retired once, he said, "for a couple of weeks."

What the Farmington Hills resident is doing now is signing autographs in his latest book, "WYXIE Wonderland," subtitled "An Unauthorized 50-year Diary of WXYZ, Detroit."

Osgood insists his book is not meant to be autobiographical. But because he lived it all, and the book reads much more like a novel than a history, it is not out of line to say that he is one of the main characters.

His career from stage to radio to television broadened him. WXYZ when Detroit was known as the radio hub of the nation. He stayed for 35 years, playing dramatic roles, reviewing movies, reporting news,

people

interviewing celebrities.

He was a newscaster and a master of ceremonies, gave special announcements and was a one-time studio manager. He wrote plays, scripts, a syndicated series and copy for all of the live talent that came that way.

Just for Hi-Speed Gas Stations, he wrote more than 2,000 scripts; meanwhile, he was doing a column for the Detroit Free Press.

WXYZ WAS the home of the Lone Ranger, the Green Hornet and Sergeant Preston.

"I think time will prove the Lone Ranger to be the classic radio program," Osgood said. "I'm always surprised to find out how many fans are still around. It was certainly the most famous of all the programs made here, embraced nationwide, and it was made at the time radio was moving out of its dabbling stage into show biz."

It does not go without notice that

Osgood will sometimes read a note for a quick reference without his glasses. The eyes are as sharp as his memory, which recalls the rise of the disc jockey, the fixed quiz show, the payola scandals, the music revolution when rock and roll records overthrew in-house bands.

Osgood tells stories of stars in every field of sports and entertainment — interspersed with stories of those behind the scenes, how WXYZ weathered five ownerships, dozens of changes in management and as many shifts in policy.

"It's as true a story as I can be," he says of his book. "If I was a little vague on a point, I always compared reminiscences to see whose were the sharper."

"WYXIE WONDERLAND" was a long time in the making. The idea for the book came near his retirement from the station in 1971, but that was the retirement that only lasted a few weeks.

"They made me an offer I couldn't refuse," Osgood said of his latter-day career with Greenfield Village, where the pace was as swift and as varied as it had been

with WXYZ. It was swift because he was writing and recording five scripts a month, all concerning history trivia, as a radio promotion for Greenfield Village.

It was varied because he had the whole of the village and museum to choose from for his subject matter. "I'm a curious man by nature, so it was the obscure that intrigued me. I concentrated only on the little known facts. I researched out every piece, many times in the Burton (Historical) Collection, or the Farmington libraries. It made me a history buff."

"Did you know Betsy Ross was married three times? Did you know John Paul Jones was buried in obscurity and it wasn't until 100 years later, we decided he was a hero? Did you know Charles Linbergh was what we'd call a daredevil today?"

But offset topics are not strangers to Osgood. He said his favorite writing was done between 1936 and 1941 for a series called

Please turn to Page 4

Alcohol free Virgin beverages served up

By Christine Rizk
staff writer

So you say you don't drink and never have any fun going to the corner pub on New Year's Eve.

This year, you may be in luck. Farmington-area restaurateurs and tavern owners plan a full menu of non-alcoholic beverages designed to please their patrons and keep everyone sober.

Steve Genuend of O'Sheehan's

Tavern, an Irish entry in Farmington Hills, said he expects more orders for virgin drinks — non-alcoholic counterparts of popular alcoholic beverages — than in previous years.

Although the tavern will stay open only until 10 p.m. New Year's Eve, he plans to keep a tight hand on drinks served to patrons. Genuend said.

In an effort to encourage non-drinkers to join the festivities, Genuend will offer a whole line of

drinks without alcohol.

"Virtually any drink you can make with alcohol you can make without," he said. "Obviously, those drinks made with just alcohol wouldn't constitute a virgin drink, but we will make any drink without liquor."

DUNLEAVY'S PUB and Grub owner Jack Dunleavy agreed that

Please turn to Page 7

what's inside

Around Farmington . . . 2C
Crossword puzzle . . . 4C
Entertainment . . . 5-6B
Police/fire calls . . . 6A
Shopping cart . . . 1-2B
Short takes . . . 3A
Sports . . . 1-2B
Suburban life . . . 1-2C

Classifieds . . . Sections B-D
Index . . . 3C
Auto Index . . . Section D
Real estate . . . Section D
Employment . . . 3C

Early Deadlines

Due to the holiday, we will be closed Thursday, Jan. 1, 1987. Our New Year's issue will be available on Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1986.

To place your classified ad in the Wednesday edition, please call Monday, Dec. 29, before 5:00 p.m.

Oakland County
644-1070