

Handicapped get helping hand, 1B



Farmington relay tops, D1

Chamber chairman talks business, 1C

Farmington Observer

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Merlo's intent: kill self, not wife

By Casey Hans
staff writer

John Merlo told an Oakland County Circuit Court jury this week he did not remember firing four shots into his wife's body following an argument 20 years ago.

Convicted of the bloody murder of 18-year-old Sharon Kamen Merlo in a Farmington Township beauty salon in 1967, Merlo is being retried

after appealing the case on a technicality.

Under law, the jury cannot be advised of his prior first degree murder conviction, for which he has already served 20 years of a life sentence.

He is seeking a lesser murder conviction from the new jury, which would make him eligible for parole.

"I recall firing shots and leaving the building," the 45-year-old de-

fendant testified in Circuit Judge Fred Meester's courtroom Tuesday. "I stepped out the door and I tried to find direction. I panicked."

MERLO HAD visited a bar near the Crest Beauty Salon, drinking at least eight shots of whiskey with beer chasers before confronting his wife on Jan. 6, 1967, about ending their marital separation. Sharon Merlo was living with their 3-month-

old son in her parents' Redford Township home.

"It (the gun) should have been pointed at me," he said. "I had no intention of killing Sharon at that time. It (the shooting) was a combination of the entire situation, including the alcohol."

The "situation" went from bad to worse following the couple's April 1966 marriage when Sharon Merlo discovered she was pregnant. Their

marriage lasted less than one year. Sharon Merlo dated a former boyfriend while the couple was separated. A seemingly obsessed John Merlo followed his wife for several months, pleading with her to return.

Merlo testified the real problems in his marriage began after his son was born in September 1966. Until that time, "we were very compati-

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Farmington FOCUS

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It was a day City Manager William Costick had long waited for.

Plagued by construction fits and starts for the past three years, Costick, relished the sun-splashed dedication that officially marked the opening of the new Farmington Hills Police Facility Friday amid much fanfare.

The 36,000-square-foot, \$3.3-million building is next to the city hall at Orchard Lake Road and 11 Mile.

Noting an architect was consulted as far back as 1982, Costick quipped: "We've waited a long time for this day. I can tell you that."

ON the road... Farmington Hills City Council approved two resurfacing agreements with the Oakland County Road Commission last week.

The city will pay \$110,000 of the \$460,000 cost to resurface 12 Mile, between Orchard Lake Road and Inkster. It will pay \$110,000 of the \$300,000 cost to resurface 10 Mile, between Orchard Lake Road and Inkster.

AS the parade passes through... Grand River will be closed from Power to Gill in Farmington 5-7 p.m. Saturday for the Knights Templar parade.

The Downtown Farmington Center will open to shoppers, however, said Gary Goss, Department of Public Safety Deputy director.

FOOTNOTES: The city council proclaimed June 14 as National Flag Day in Farmington in conjunction with the national observance.

School election Monday

By Casey Hans
staff writer

One candidate demands insight, while another seeks to follow the progress of a new school administration.

Jennifer Mart wants to delve into curriculum issues, Susan Rennels says there's a bigger school picture to complete.

The two Farmington Hills women will square off Monday, June 8, in the annual Farmington school election, vying for a four-year non-partisan seat on the Farmington Board of Education. Rennels, 45, is a first-term incumbent. Mart, 36, is a political newcomer.

They met May 28 in a debate sponsored by the Farmington Branch, American Association of University Women, at O.E. Dunckel Middle School. The candidate's night was taped and is airing this week on local cable access Channel 12.

"I have some real concerns," said Mart in her opening statement. "I'm very concerned about my son's future; I know I'm not the only parent that has concerns. I guess my reasons (for running) are selfish."

MART IS a kindergarten teacher for the Birmingham schools and has

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Horsing around



LAURA CASTLE/staff photographer

From the security of his mom's arms, Curtie Nichol, 3, of Farmington Hills, makes friends with Scout, which belongs to the Oakland County Public Safety Mounted Division. Division members were among the participants at the festive dedica-

tion of the new Farmington Hills Police Facility Friday. The building is next to the city hall at Orchard Lake Road and 11 Mile. For a closer look at the dedication and for more pictures, see Page 3A.

Teens warned about substance abuse

"What we are saying is, 'Kids, we want you to have a good time. But we want you to remember the good times you had.'"

— Betty Nicolay
Families in Action



By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

For years, Betty Nicolay has spread the message that drugs, alcohol and teenagers don't mix.

Teens will again hear and see that message in the form of a new brochure that spells out simple, yet important facts about substance abuse, teens and the law.

"I feel so strongly that kids have to hear the same message," said Nicolay, of the Farmington Families in Action. "They must know our entire community feels the same way about drug use as we do."

Because teens are faced with making a choice about drugs and alcohol, the brochure provides facts that can be used to aid youths in making a wise and safe choice, Nico-

lay said.

"It's a community responsibility — the observation that substance abuse is still a problem and is as big as it ever was," said Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

Nicolay and Nebus are members of a relatively new group, Farmington Hills Subcommittee for the Prevention of Teenage Delinquency. It consists of educators, parents, police and merchants.

THE BROCHURE is the subcommittee's brainchild and provides pertinent facts in a way that teens and their parents can identify.

Facts about far away cities and people are not included in the brochure. Farmington Hills and its teens and families are the focus.

"We tried to make it apply locally. We wanted to let them know what can happen to them. We thought that if we made it local, we could get rid of the notion they have that 'it can't happen to me,'" Nebus said. "That's a common attitude, but we thought we would bring it home to show that it can happen to them."

The brochure documents facts about city ordinances — loitering, host party liability, curfew — that may affect teens and consequently their parents. Also listed are the legal consequences for certain activities, such as renting a hotel room for partying.

And on the back of the brochure is a short story titled "Sobering Facts." The story, of recent deaths involving

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HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

CREATIVE LIVING REAL ESTATE GUIDE

IN EVERY THURSDAY EDITION

Dad helps shape memorial to son

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

It's just as his son would have wanted it.

Farmington Hills resident Jim Rainey says he's delighted with plans for the Gary L. Rainey Memorial Wildlife Area in the Lake Superior State Forest, along the northern shore of Indian Lake in the Upper Peninsula.

Ground breaking is less than a month away. The area is intended to be a haven for waterfowl and nature observers. Hunting and fishing opportunities also are anticipated.

Ground breaking will come two years after Rainey won support from fellow Michigan Conservation

Foundation trustees to approach the state Department of Natural Resources with the idea of developing a memorial to Gary.

The volunteer, tax-exempt foundation sports the motto, "Helping Wildlife Is Everybody's Business."

Gary Rainey, a sportsman just like his dad, was 27 when he was killed in a 1981 traffic accident in Wyoming's Bighorn Mountains. That's where he had bought a hunting lodge two years before. Gary graduated from North Farmington High School in 1972.

RAINEY FELT a wildlife area designed particularly for school children would be a fitting memorial to his son's passion for the outdoors.

"What we've tried to do is make it a place for teachers to take their students to learn about nature," said Rainey, who, six years later, still becomes emotional when talking about his son's zest for living.

The DNR will manage the 99-acre wildlife area. Completion is targeted for 1989. The Schoolcraft County site was donated by owners Roland and Dorothy Hoholik and Donald and Cecile Hoholik.

Rainey envisions nesting places for eagles, osprey, bluebirds and wood ducks, three quarter-mile-long nature paths, a wood viewing platform and a rustic bridge. He envisions them blending well with the rolling, wooded terrain that's traversed by two creeks. Deer,

squirrels, rabbits, woodcocks and ruffed grouse are among the area's current inhabitants.

Plans may include developing pot holes in the marshy regions to accommodate duck nests and brood growth. No camping will be permitted. The DNR's conceptual site plan also shows an information center near a small parking lot.

GOOD FISHING could result from managing and protecting the wetlands and pike spawning area, added Greg Stoll, a biologist in the DNR's Newbury District.

A limestone marker with a bronze plaque in Gary Rainey's memory will be erected near the viewing platform.



Gary Rainey loved the outdoors