

Girl Scout cookie sale under way, 1B



Invitational results, 3D

Nothing automatic about guns plans, 2A

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In a recent discussion about where to place public questions and comments on the Farmington Hills City Council agenda, councilwoman Jody Soronen reflected on her year as mayor in 1987. "Most nights it was not a problem. Obviously, some nights it was overwhelming! I guess I always felt if somebody was out there who had something nasty to say, I didn't want to sit here and wonder what it was."

BEHIND the mike. Ernie Harwell, 71, will begin his 29th year broadcasting Detroit Tiger games this spring in Lakeland, Fla. When not traveling with the team, the Major League Baseball Hall of Famer lives in Farmington Hills.

THIS is National Burn Awareness Week. As designated by Congress, the week is designed to focus public attention on the problem of burn injuries in this country.

Quote of the week

"We bought this place because of the wildlife. It just ticks me off. I suspect people are dumping right into the water or along the banks. Tons of Styrofoam come down."

— Farmington Hills resident Joe Derek. He and his wife, Judy, live on the banks of the Rouge River and are doing their part to keep it clean (see story this page).

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SPECIAL SECTION IN TODAY'S ISSUE



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Farmington Hills resident Joe Derek pulls garbage from the creek meandering behind his 10 Mile Road property. The creek flows eastward into the Rouge River.

Garbage patrol Rouge polluters anger resident

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

When Joe Derek walks along the peaceful creek meandering behind his Farmington Hills house, what greets him are old tires, Styrofoam materials, wrapping paper, grass cuttings and even toothbrushes. "Every couple days, I've been fishing it out," Derek said. "Whoever dumps this stuff . . . I think it's terrible." Derek and his wife, Judy, bought their 10 Mile Road home, just east of the Pines subdivision, for its large treed lot, flowers and the creek. The creek, which leads eastward to the Rouge River, was dry all summer. September brought the rains, a creekful of rushing water and the garbage. And as far as Derek can tell, the dumping is recent. One of the plastic bags contained Christmas wrapping paper. Others contained Halloween decorations and the usual household garbage. "We bought this place because of the wildlife. It just

ticks me off," Derek said. "I suspect people are dumping right into the water or along the banks. Tons of Styrofoam come down."

Derek's great love is the environment and the need to maintain it. He's currently changing careers from a research lab technician at Sinai Hospital of Detroit to a full-time spokesman for the protection of the environment as an outdoors educator.

"IT DOESN'T seem logical that people would take the time to pass the creek and dump it in," said Jean Barrett, Farmington Hills assistant to the public services director. "In the old days, people used to do that but hopefully today, they know better."

According to Friends of the Rouge director Bill Jakeway, people still don't know better, or just don't care, about the condition of surrounding waterways. "The stuff we're taking out of the Rouge has been put there by people. It's not industry. It's not business.

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DDA to enter rezoning fray over center

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Farmington's Downtown Development Authority will take a position early next week on the proposed rezoning of land abutting the Mulwood Square shopping center in Farmington Hills.

DDA members are concerned the proposed rezoning, subsequent expansion of the center and addition of a supermarket anchor might negatively impact the downtown area, which they are actively working to rejuvenate. Mulwood Square sits at the northwest corner of Grand River and Drake, one mile from downtown Farmington and on the border of Farmington and Farmington Hills. The developers, Bestak Building Co. of Farmington Hills, will appear before the Farmington Hills Planning Commission Feb. 16, when the rezoning petition will be considered. Bestak tries to have the hearing adjourned so it could gather more information for the DDA, but Hills city planner Ed Gardiner said the hearing had already been advertised and could not be postponed.

"If this was all one community, we'd never have Farmington Hills considering it (the Bestak development), or Farmington opposing it."

— Frank Clappison
DDA member

"After they (planning commissioners) hear everything, it will be up to the planning commission to determine whether they need an adjournment," Gardiner said.

DDA MEMBERS met this week, and agreed to postpone taking a position on the development, pending Bestak securing an adjournment. Since that could not be done, the DDA will meet Monday at a special 8 a.m. meeting, according to DDA executive director Wendy Strip Sittsamer.

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Home fireplace explodes in city

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A fireplace in a house on Tall Pines in Farmington exploded Saturday night, sending one woman to the hospital and causing about \$5,000 in damage.

Farmington public safety officials determined the explosion was caused by steam build-up in an auxiliary heating unit attached to the fireplace.

Impact from the explosion imbedded pieces of the glass fireplace doors into a family room wall 25 feet away. Brickwork surrounding the fireplace was blown away from the wall, according to information from Farmington Fire Marshal Joseph Schornack.

Tall Pines is off of Drake, just south of Grand River. The incident occurred shortly after 9:30 p.m. Injured in the explosion was 37-year-old resident Barbara Gale Sears. She and her husband, John, were watching television when the explosion occurred.

The woman was released from Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills Monday after treatment for cuts to her face, arms and legs, officials said.

SCHORNACK SAID had the victim, who was reclining, been standing in front of the fireplace, her injuries could have been much worse. The explosion was caused when water left in an auxiliary heating

unit attached to the fireplace heated past its boiling point.

"As the wood . . . heated up, the water inside the insert heated past its boiling point and turned into steam," Schornack explained in his report. "As the heat increased, the steam built up pressure . . . and eventually ruptured the system at its weakest point."

The house has a hot water heating system, mostly handled through a large boiler in the basement.

The explosion — at about 8:15 p.m. — John Sears went to the basement to shut down the auxiliary water grate. Apparently, there was some existing water left in the system that caused the problem, the public safety report said.

SCHORNACK SAID in his report the auxiliary water heating unit appeared to have been installed with the fireplace, probably when the residence was built. "It's the first one I've ever seen," he said. "This was something just to supplement the boiler system."

There was \$5,000 damage to the house and another \$3,000 damage to its contents, according to the report filed by Officer Carl Swanderski, who arrived at the scene Saturday to put out spot fires in the family room caused by the explosion. Swanderski found Barbara Sears lying on the kitchen floor, where she was treated by Community EMS paramedics and taken to Botsford.

Chrysler retiree wins back honor with suit



George Kuzmanovich
'this is a relief'

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

George Kuzmanovich is disillusioned with the American auto industry he worked hard for and was loyal to for 30 years.

"Car people are tough people. You are a number, no matter what level you are on," the Farmington Hills resident said.

Kuzmanovich is one of 231 former Chrysler Corp. employees who will collectively receive \$8.1 million from the automaker following a December settlement in an age discrimination suit filed in 1981 by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

For Kuzmanovich, 65, the past eight years have been a long haul. "The money is fine. But the fact this

is finally settled . . . this is a relief."

Kuzmanovich was looking forward to continuing his then-22-year management career with Chrysler. At 55 in April 1980, his manager suddenly offered him a retirement package. Kuzmanovich hedged. He wanted to work.

"A few days later they said, 'If you don't take it, you'll be laid off permanently,'" Kuzmanovich said. "Under coercion, I took the retirement. But they admitted they would have laid me off. My manager said they were offering retirement to older people to make way for younger people."

WITHIN the week, Kuzmanovich was out the door with no idea of the type of retirement benefits Chrysler

"Under coercion, I took the retirement. But they admitted they would have laid me off."

— George Kuzmanovich
former Chrysler employee

was giving him for his involuntary early retirement. "They didn't even kiss me goodbye," he added.

When Kuzmanovich left, a younger woman, whom he trained, took his place.

Like many of his colleagues retired before their time, Kuzmanovich was shocked that a company he'd worked long and hard for would turn him out, despite his qualifications. "This was the hard thing. I'm here. I do my job. It's a devastating

thing to happen," said Kuzmanovich, now retired from a string of temporary jobs with other automakers.

The EEOC's suit contended that 82 of the employees, including Kuzmanovich, were retired against their will, a violation of the Federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. The federal agency also contended that the remaining 149 employees were threatened with dis-

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