

# Farmington Observer

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# TODAY

**Top dogs:** The winning pets and their owners from Kids Day last week are listed. /2A

**Beauty and talent:** What would the Farmington Founders Festival be without the annual Scholarship Pageant? /3A

**Talking trash:** Farmington Hills took the long term approach to recycling by approving a 15-year contract with a regional authority. /4A

## STREET SCENE

**It's Jason:** He's been compared to Jimi Hendrix and Lenny Kravitz. His smooth, soulful voice has been likened to Peter Gabriel, Sting, Seal and even D'Arby. But Jason McCauley Berry would prefer to be judged on his own merits. /5A

## OPINION

**Just say no:** Taxpayers can't say no to everything, but they can give the "thumbs down" sign to new taxes. /8A

## COUNTY NEWS

**Prosecutor's response:** Richard Thompson stands before the county board to deny charges of "political corruption." /9A

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**Stone fruits:** Gemstone fruits would be a more appropriate name for such succulent fruits as peaches, plums, nectarines and cherries. At their best they need no embellishment. /1B

## MALLS & MAINSTREETS



**Java's In:** The coffee house is making a comeback, offering a gathering and watering spot for young and old. One is in downtown Farmington. /4B

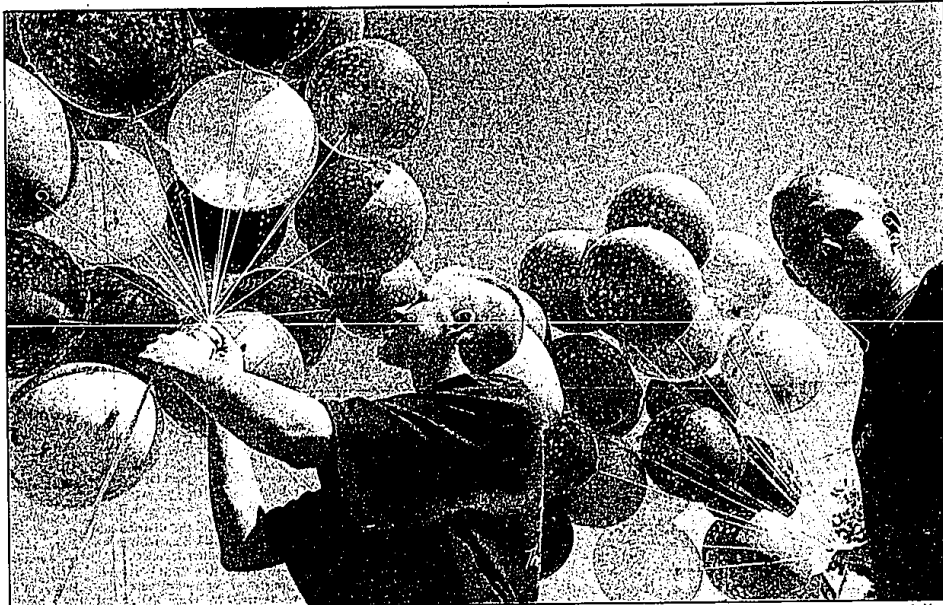
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## Sales are up



Young businessmen: Bill Floyd, 15, (left) and John Shannon, 16, peddled balloons to onlookers along the Farmington Founders Festival parade route Saturday.

# Sun shines on big parade crowd



Good news: Ithalia Trevisan, 89, watches the parade in a bonnet made of newsprint.

By BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

The lawn chairs were set out early on a beautiful sunny day that brought out a crowd at the Farmington Founders Festival parade Saturday.

Some, hawking their food and drink along the Grand River parade route, did a brisk business, while sales for many selling arts and crafts was mixed.

"This is not a buying crowd," said one vendor. But for Paula Hanson of Orchard Lake, sales of her decorative wooden fish are up this year.

"It's been pretty good compared to two years ago," she said.

If the crowd, described by Farmington Hills city manager Bill Costick as heavier than last year's, held back on the crafts, they didn't hold back on the enthusiasm for the parade.

Founders Festival road race contestants trotted past the reviewing stand at about 9:15 a.m. to start things off, with Mike Lesley beating former Farmington High School star Ben Gobe in the four-mile race that ended in Shiawassee Park.

Attention then turned to a shorter

race, as the "Hot Dogs" of the Farmington Hills Fire Department edged Lox, Stock and Barrell in the bed race for the fire department's third-straight win.

"Three-peat!" shouted the joyful firefighters as they each held up three fingers after piloting the winning bed.

"We do take it somewhat seriously," said Denny Hughes. "We finished second the first two years, so we wanted to win. There's real competition to make the team."

The practice paid off, but the losing team members had fun, too.

"We just didn't practice," said Rafi Bogosian of Farmington, a member of the team from the Yin Yang Bead Shop. "Last year we finished second. We were too confident."

"I loved it," said first-time bed racer Susie Martin, a member of the Botsford Continuing Health Care team. "We just practiced three days ago for the first time."

But the parade was the main event for the human wall of kids, parents and grandparents on both sides of Grand River.

The Farmington Hills Fire Depart-

ment clown troupe led off the parade at 10:30 a.m. The festival queen and her court, both city councilors, the Founders Festival Band, the Moslem Shrine and antique cars were included. But there were some unusual and creative participants as well.

A group of Dunckel Middle School students showed its talent as a lunch box drill team, a la the better-known brief case drill team. Some youngsters from the Kids Who Read Succeed program at the library, dressed as wooden blocks, went through spelling drills; and a group from Robert Picard Sports adapted its ice hockey theme to Rollerblades for the occasion.

Some veteran parade watchers avoided the heat and still had a good view.

"I find the biggest tree for shade and the softest grass and enjoy the view," said Doris McAuliffe, a 17-year resident of Farmington.

But Farmington attorney Greg Cation went one better. He just pulled up a chair on the porch of his Grand River house and stayed cool and comfortable.



Just kidding: The parade crowd gets a kick out of a prank offered by a member of the Farmington Hills Fire Department Clown Troupe.



Margo Secuda, 8, enjoys her third year at the parade with her unnamed puppy.

# Battle brewing over school health care

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

In a move that could have legal implications down the road, the Farmington School District has switched health care administrators for its unionized employees.

A grievance has already been filed on behalf of three unions, representing 1,200 district employees over the planned change from Michigan Education Special Services Association to a new administrator.

An arbitration hearing is set for early December. MESSA is a business operation of the Michigan Education Association, which represents school employees statewide.

"I simply believe we have a contract that provides the MESSA insurance," said Zan Alley, spokeswoman for the Farmington Education Association. "We didn't bargain the cost of the insurance. We bargained for the carrier and the coverage."

School district officials say coverage will be unaffected. The only change is in who will process union employee health claims starting Aug. 1.

Michigan Employee Benefit Services, which has handled district administrators' health claims for seven years, will replace MESSA as the third party administrator. As with the MESSA plan, Blue Cross/Blue Shield is the health care insurance provider.

"We have the specifications of the benefits from the other plan," said Employee Relations director Sue Zurvalec, "and we have matched that."

A mistake in a price quote by MESSA forced the change, according to school officials.

The school board was originally quoted a figure of slightly more than \$4 million from MESSA for medical insurance coverage during last summer's contract negotiations, according to Zurvalec. Board members thought that figure was low at the time but were told it was accurate.

In November, after the contract was settled, MESSA said it made a mistake in calculating

See BATTLE, 2A