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IN THE PAPER

# TODAY

**A great trip:** Vanessa Wells has quite a story to tell her classmates at William Grace Elementary School in Farmington Hills. /3A

## COUNTY NEWS

**It's bad:** A panel of experts assembled by U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg hasn't seen the Clinton health-care plan, but doesn't like it anyway. /5A

## OPINION

**School's ini:** The kids are out en masse, and that means that motorists must make some mental adjustments. /12A

**Guest column:** Farmington resident Joan Polus observes that bad things do sometimes happen to good people. But this story isn't over yet. /13A

## SPORTS

**Hawks lose top player:** The Harrison football team hopes to rebound in 1993, but will have to do so without its star tailback. /1B

**Farmington preview:** The Falcons have a new coach and renewed optimism as they enter a new high school football season. /1B

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# Chamber packs its shopping bags



Summon the moving van and look for a few old boxes. The chamber of commerce is moving off Farmington's main street. The chamber will move into a school-district building rent-free, in exchange for a free chamber membership for the schools.

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce is moving. Sometime in October, the chamber will set up offices in the Farmington Training Center on Thomas Street north of Grand River in downtown

Farmington.

The price is right. The chamber will pay no rent under the proposed agreement, according to director Jody Soronen. Instead, the Farmington Public School District will provide the office space rent-free in return for chamber

membership at no charge for the schools.

The chamber is paying \$1,223 a month for its current office at 33411 Grand River, just west of Farmington Road. The office is owned by Elaman Properties.

"I'm sad to see them go," said Jim Elaman, owner of Elaman Properties. "They were great tenants."

Both the schools and chamber see the arrangement as a trade-off.

"The chamber has been working with us for a number of years in a variety of partnership activities," said

Pam O'Malley, assistant superintendent for community relations for Farmington schools.

Said Soronen: "We're doing more and more programs together and find that it's been beneficial to both parties."

For free rent, though, the chamber gives up some visibility and office space. The chamber's current walk-in office is near the corner of Grand River and Farmington.

The chamber has had offices there for four years.

See CHAMBER, 4A

# She just does it: Golden-age Olympian going like 80



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Olympian: Sandy Darvin, a gold and silver medal winner in the Senior Olympics, warms up before teaching a yoga class at the Farmington Hills Senior Center.

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Sandy Darvin has a secret. She'll betray it at the slightest nudge. Leaning over and gently placing her hand on a person's forearm, Darvin divulges that she has the answer to eternal life.

"When someone starts talking bad about someone else, I say, 'Gee, why, I'm in a hurry' and I go," said Darvin, 80, who lives in Farmington Hills. "Gossip and putting people down, it's not good for your health."

That's only one pearl of wisdom Darvin imparts.

Eat legumes and brown rice, Darvin recommends. Chew on red and yellow vegetables along with the green ones, she says in a sagely voice. Ten to 11 almonds a day keeps the dentist away, she contends.

And for crying out loud, she hastens to add, don't smoke. Exercise, of course.

OK, so they're hardly revelations. But in her intimate way, the staleness in which they are relayed is as intriguing as the individual.

Darvin's an interesting case of longevity.

She's a Senior Olympian, a long-time yoga instructor, and a vegetarian of 30 years who grows her own produce.

She took karate, managed a health food store at one time, delivered mail in subzero weather, became a certified lifeguard at 70, and somehow managed to raise three boys.

"I've done a lot of things," she said.

Her glow competes with the three gold and silver medals she won in swimming events at the state Senior Olympics in Holland, Mich., this summer. She proudly pulls them from a plastic bread bag, which still

See OLYMPIAN, 4A

# Family's green planting reaps healthy harvest

By BILL COUXTANT  
STAFF WRITER

You can't miss Herman Meinke's Coza Street house — it sticks out like a green thumb.

Meinke has made his yard a laboratory of plant life. He grows everything from herbs and exotic fruit trees to medicinal weeds. His corn stalks can reach as high as 16 feet with ears of up to 28 inches, all without herbicides or pesticides.

For 40 years Meinke has been experimenting with ways to grow bigger and healthier varieties of plants without damaging the environment. He's even abandoned some practices of organic gardening as damaging to the environment.

"If man wants to survive, he must get along with nature," said the 63-year-old.

To that end, Meinke, his wife, Susan, and three grown children have found ways of growing disease-free plants, fruits and vegetables without harming groundwater or wildlife.

In fact, bees and other insects are attracted to nectar-producing flowers, but harmful insects have not claimed his plants.

"I notice after a storm, the water from my neighbors' yards will flow here," he said, pointing to a small blighted area in his yard. "That's because of the pesticides."

Although he has no particular fondness for a green lawn, he has even grown a pesticide-free stripe of thick grass that has longer roots than most grasses to show it can be done without chemicals or fertilizers.

See HARVEST, 2A



**'When they (neighbors) have a problem, they'll come to me. But then you'll see that they're gone for a couple of days and the chemical trucks come in. . . It only took a little drum of toxins to ruin the Love Canal. This (pesticides) evaporates into the air we breath. And it amounts to a ton of the stuff.'**

Herman Meinke gardener

## She's some volunteer

S holla Gannon, a volunteer worker at Botsford Continuing Health Center in Farmington Hills, was nominated recently for the Health Care Association of Michigan's Volunteer of the Year award.

Gannon, a Farmington Hills resident, has been a volunteer at BCHC for more than 20 years. On the first and second Tuesday of each month, she spends her afternoon at the facility assisting the Rev. Gerald McEnhill of St. Gerald's Catholic Church in Farmington with Mass or the rosary prayer service.

Afterwards, Gannon visits residents who didn't attend the service. She assists these residents with prayer if they wish, or she spends time getting to know them better. Gannon says she especially enjoys hearing the

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

many interesting life stories, and marvels at "the courage and accomplishments of an older generation."

For the HCAM nomination, Gannon explained why she volunteers.

"I've felt useful and fulfilled, and hopefully I've learned some measure of patience and compassion," she said. "It's taught me a lot about the gift of life and about the time when life comes to an end."

"I've received far more than I have ever given," Gannon, the mother of five and the grandmother of six, enjoys classical music, gardening and in-

volvement with community service projects through her church.

## Memory Lane

From the Sept. 3, 1983 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

The new 22-classroom Farmington High School on Shiloh was to open Sept. 10. "All of the rooms are decorated in bright colors utilizing a maximum of natural light," said an Enterprise article. Junior high students took over the former high school building on Thomas Street.

Dancers Department Store in downtown Farmington advertised saddle shoes at \$4.45 and \$3.99.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336; dropped off at the newspaper office; or faxed to 477-9722.