

It's sick time as flu bugs area



Influenza is sweeping across metropolitan Detroit — and the Farmington area certainly has not been spared. A Botsford Hospital doctor says younger people are being hit especially hard.

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The flu bug has landed in the Farmington area like a Buster Douglas right to the chops.

Hospital emergency rooms are being overrun and people are missing school and work as a particularly virulent strain of influenza makes the

rounds. Farmington Place, an apartment complex for senior residents, has suspended all activities as a result of the outbreak.

A spokeswoman said a dozen or so people are sick, which has prompted apartment management to stop dining room food service. Instead, meals

are being brought directly to the apartments.

Also, leisure activities such as bingo and cards have been canceled. "We didn't want it to spread," a member of management said.

Absenteeism is up at three Farmington public high schools. Attendance secretaries said the weather is part of the reason, but the flu has left its mark.

"We've had more than usual," said North Farmington High attendance secretary Laura Gruver. "It happens every year. This year it seems maybe it's lasting longer. It seems to be last-

ing a week."

Added Farmington High attendance secretary Dolly Shannon: "Before Christmas, we had more people out due to illness. Right now, it's normal."

An assembly was cut short Thursday at Highmeadow Common Campus when a child became ill.

Businesses — both small and large — are feeling the bite of the flu bug.

"I had several people call in during the past week," said Jean Marion, a manager of the Bon Ton Shoppes in

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IN THE PAPER

TODAY

New pool for school: North Farmington High will have a new swimming pool. The present tank is too shallow for competitive swimming. /3A

Snowing and blowing: No, the public schools weren't closed, but last Thursday's snowstorm reminded everyone that there's plenty of winter left. /3A

A man for Botsford: The top trustee at the Farmington Hills hospital has a vision for health care. /3A

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

Mall moguls: Do you know who owns your favorite shopping center? Here's a rundown. /4A

Behind the Label: Knitwear designer Andrea Jovine explains why her collections work. /4A

TASTE



Low-fat desserts: 'Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too.' Baker Susan Purdy explains how. /1B

SPORTS

Court victory: North Farmington won its first Western Lakes volleyball match in two years. /1C

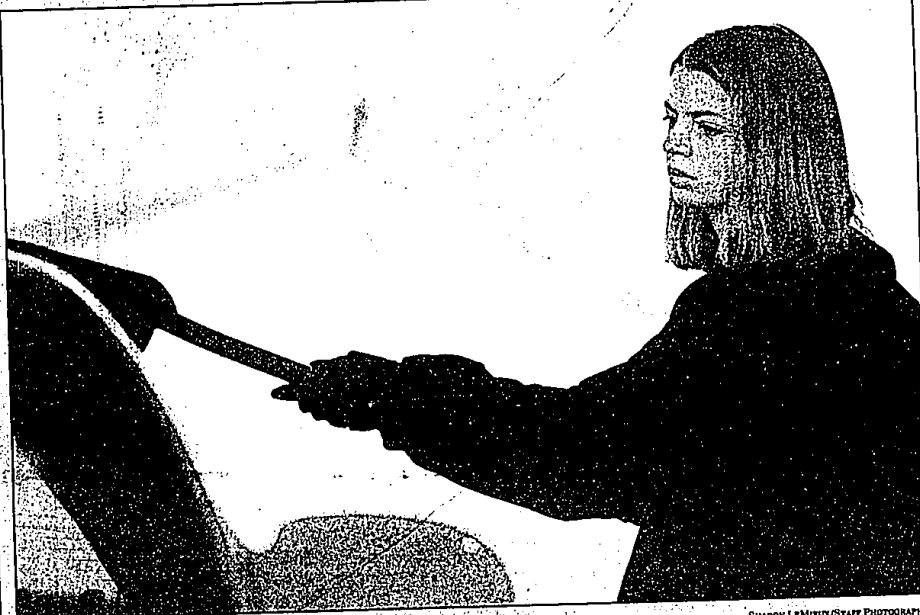
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She's proud of her wheels



SHARON LEMMON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Car cleanup: Nicole Dulimba, an 18-year-old Farmington Hills resident, washes her 1993 Ford Probe at the Farmington Auto Wash on Grand River. She says she washes the car, a gift she bought herself after her high school graduation, twice a week.

Woman beaten to death; husband arrested

By TOM BAER
STAFF WRITER

An Oxford man has been charged with the slaying of his wife Saturday morning after she was beaten with a hammer in front of two witnesses in a Farmington dental office.

Raymond Ponke, 40, was arraigned Sunday on a charge of first degree murder before Magistrate Joan Dudley. The preliminary examination is 8:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 14, at 47th District Court.

He is being held without bond in Oakland County Jail.

Farmington police identified the

victim as Jackie Ponke, 35, an assistant to Dr. Alan Bredin, a dentist with an office on Freedom Road.

"The two of them (Bredin and Jackie Ponke) were in the office working on a patient," said Gary Goss, Farmington's director of Public Safety. "A man came into the office with a hammer and without warning struck Jackie numerous times in the head with the hammer."

"The doctor tried to intervene, but was unsuccessful. So he took the patient, left the office and called the police from a nearby residence. "The witnesses (Bredin and the pa-

tient) observed at least three blows."

When police arrived, Goss continued, officer Jim Madigan saw a man coming out of the office with a hammer in his hand.

"He surrendered to Jim without incident," Goss said. "His first words: 'I had to do it.'"

Jackie Ponke had been separated from her husband since about Thanksgiving, Goss said, and there was a custody dispute over the couple's 9-year-old daughter.

A restraining order and a spousal abuse injunction had been filed Jan. 4 against the husband and the victim

had also filed "a complaint for divorce" Dec. 6, police said.

Jackie Ponke had been living with friends in Oxford, police said.

The patient, who police would only identify as a 32-year-old woman, was having her teeth cleaned at the time when the attack occurred.

Bredin was unavailable for comment.

The couple, both Farmington High School graduates, had been married for 19 years, police said. The victim's maiden name was Lutz, police said.

The homicide was the first reported in Farmington since 1978.

State gives Highmeadow 'exemplary' grade

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A high mark for Highmeadow Common Campus: it has been chosen as a state exemplary school.

The elementary school, which takes a nontraditional approach to educating students in grades 1-5, was selected by the State Board of Education for the honor.

Exemplary school status is based on leadership, teaching methods, curriculum, student environment, test scores and parental involvement.

This year, there was a special emphasis on math and science.

The distinction puts Highmeadow

'The things they teach these kids to do are more practical for the real world. Instead of just feeding them information, they are doing things that are hands-on.'

Lynda Mokris

volunteer, Highmeadow Common Campus

in consideration as a national exemplary school.

Other schools honored

Last year, North Farmington High won both state and national exemplary honors. Kenbrook Elementary

was selected for state exemplary status in 1991.

"It's another validation. It's almost like a reward for everyone's hard work," said Highmeadow principal Janice Colilton, who said she was

Newlywed takes plunge, tries car pooling, gets cold feet

By BILL COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

A 25-year-old newlywed took a wild ride of 300 feet in her 1993 Ford Explorer over a 6-foot high berm, across a deck and into a swimming pool behind another house during Thursday's snowstorm.

She's lucky to be alive, according to Farmington Hills police.

just west of Halsted.

The Ford went over the northeast curb of the intersection, running over the street sign and on its way up the berm, then running onto the rear deck of the corner house and breaking down the deck wall before dropping 6 feet and continuing, then hitting the supports for the deck at the next house north and sliding sideways into

thrilled about the award. "It's reflects on the whole district."

Formed six years ago, the school's reputation has become well-forged as one of two elementary schools of choice in the district.

Space is limited. A lottery takes place annually for coveted places.

What distinguishes Highmeadow is its alternative methods of instruction. Students are taught core curriculum subjects in the morning, which allows them to also take four from more than 150 enrichment courses offered.

See EXEMPLARY, 9A

the swimming pool of that house.

Police said a Farmington Square subdivision resident who was passing by at the time, saw Montross after she had gotten out of her vehicle, helped her to his house on Shadowglen where they called police. Montross, who got married two

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