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# Farmington Observer

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## Special announcements

Starting this week, local wedding and engagement notices will become part of your Farmington Suburban Life section. The move is an effort to better serve our readers by getting these important personal announcements into the Farmington Observer in a more timely manner. Farmington and Farmington Hills residents should send their wedding and engagement information along with a photograph to Diane Gale, suburban life editor, at 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington, Mich. 48336. Preprinted forms that outline the information needed for your announcement are available in the Farmington office. If you have questions regarding your announcement, call Diane Gale at 477-5450.

## Schools, cities upbeat



BY BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

At the State of the Cities Breakfast Thursday, one of the most upbeat speakers talked about something important to both Farmington and

Farmington Hills — the state of the schools. Robert Maxfield, who will take over as Farmington schools superintendent this week, laid out the strength of the school system, its goals and the

impact of Proposal A, the school funding reform plan, all with panache and humor.

Maxfield, who had been the superintendent of the Berkeley District, recalled a farewell party thrown for him by some seventh-graders at a middle school. "One of the kids had written (on a farewell card), 'Don't forget the little

See UPBEAT, 2A



C. Robert Maxfield

## IN THE PAPER

# TODAY

**When's tea time?:** Soon, says Doris Lovill, who is opening a tea room on Grand River in Farmington. /3A

**A capital idea:** The six-year capital improvement plan for Farmington intends to hit the streets in a big way. /3A

**Taking a tumble:** For the third year in a row, crime is down in Farmington Hills, police officials say. /5A

## MALLS & MAINSTREETS

**About face:** Jacobson's debuts the Trish McAvoy line of cosmetics, putting a new face on local shoppers. /8A

**Getting pinned:** Shopping guru Linda Bachrach comes across scatter pins that protest, praise and add polish. /8A

## OPINION

**Falling students:** Educator James "Doc" Doyle says our schools must alert parents before report cards come out. /10A

## TASTE

**Easter:** Dr. Robert Majewski shares his family recipe for Polish Easter bread. /1B

**Recipe Make over:** Laura Letobar cuts the fat in Louisiana Chicken Stew from 21.1 grams to 4. /1B

## SPORTS

**Spring sports:** The North Farmington girls soccer and Harrison girls track teams are previewed in the sports section. /1C

**Sports opinion:** Sports writer Brad Emmons wants to hear from the Catholic Central administration regarding Bernie Holowicki's resignation as basketball coach. /1C

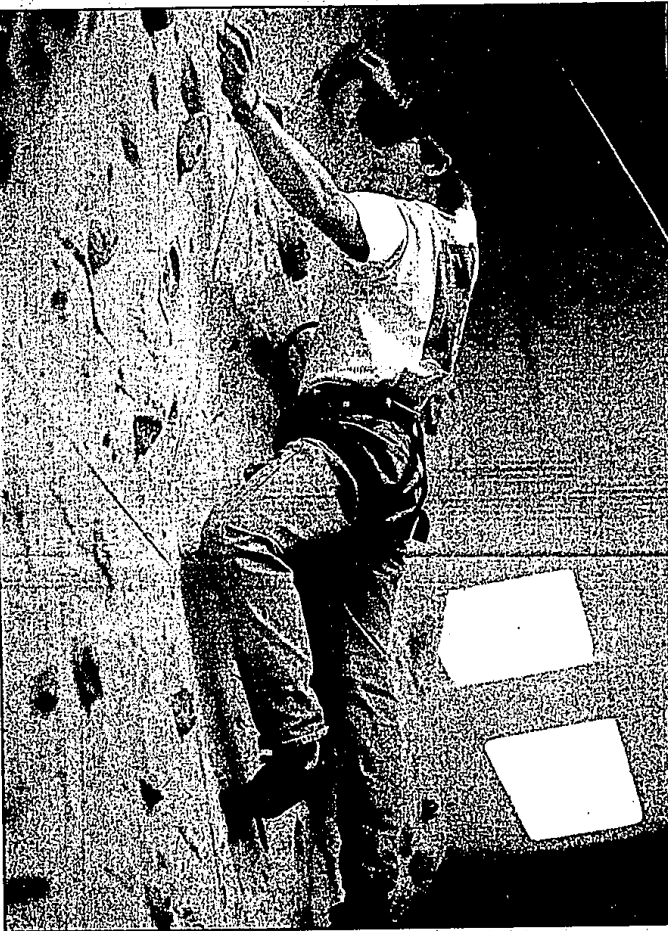
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SHARON LEMIELUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Climbing Mt. Farmington: Steve Measelle, on spring break from school, practices mountain climbing on the artificial wall at Benchmark in downtown Farmington.

## Climbers hit wall at store

BY BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

At Benchmark Sporting Goods, customers often feel like climbing the walls, and that's just fine.

In fact, the unusual store on Grand River in downtown Farmington encourages customers to climb a special wall that duplicates conditions rock climbers face in more exotic locations, like Yosemite or the Grand Teton mountains.

"In rock climbing, you can start off with a \$250 investment," said Wes Karczynski, who teaches free climbing classes at the store. "When you get to the point that you're sleeping on top of the rock, then it becomes a little more of an investment. And you have to know what you're doing."

As you enter the 14,000-square-foot store, which from the outside might be mistaken for an L-shaped office building, the 16-foot climbing wall is one of the first things you see.

And at about any time the store is open, sure enough, someone will be scaling the wall. Karczynski, 28, has been a rock climber for six years.

"We have people from 60 years old down to 3, with their parents, from all different walks of life," Karczynski said. "Different people do this for different reasons."

And even if people come into the store to buy camping equipment, they often find themselves gazing at that wall.

"A lot of people come in to buy camping equipment, then become interested in canoeing or kayaking or rock climbing," he said.

That's the kind of store it is. Tents, about 40 canoes, kayaks, fly fishing equipment, hiking and backpacking equipment and shoes are the specialty. Don't look for footballs, hockey sticks or basketballs. The only "hang time" discussed at Benchmark has to do with rock climbing.

The store is one of three in the Midwest. The other two, including a 22,000 square-foot store in Columbus, are in Ohio.

See CLIMB, 3A

## Hollywood keeps local grad in suspended animation

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Waiting in Hollywood is perhaps better than working with nuts and bolts at a hardware store. Al Jean, a 1977 Harrison High grad, has done his share of both.

The script writer worked in Jean's Hardware on 12 Mile, owned by his father, Alfred Jean. The younger Al Jean worked there while in school be-

fore working on such shows as "The Simpsons."

"It's funny," Jean said. "I watch 'Home Improvement' and I think I should work on that show, because it's about a guy who works with tools and lives in Michigan. So far, I haven't been offered anything yet."

Jean takes life and work one frame at a time.

After success with TV's cartoon

"The Simpsons," Jean and script-writing collaborator Mike Reiss concocted another animated offering, "The Critic," which has been aired on ABC-TV.

The sitcom centers on a portly New York film critic, who is sort of a schleppey Rex Reed. "Saturday Night Live" alum Jon Lovitz does the character's voice.

"We always say he's balder than

(Gene) Siskel and fatter than (Roger) Ebert," Jean said from his home in the Los Angeles area.

Six episodes of the show ran this winter, including at the height of the "Tonya Harding Olympics." Reviews were mixed.

"It was a little more difficult with this show," Jean said. "With 'The

See ANIMATION, 9A

## Roasting Jesus

Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, will be celebrated with a real difference at Trinity Episcopal Church in Farmington Hills.

The event, open to the public, will feature a 40-minute film titled "The Jesus Roast." It will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 31, in the sanctuary of the church, 26880 LaMueira, just north of 11 Mile Road between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt.

A "roast" is a spontaneous, usually secular event in which guests at a banquet rise to offer some good-natured — but roasting — comments about the guest of honor. Exaggeration and kudos peppered with gibes are part of the fun.

Film director Rolf Forsberg applies the roast format to the Last Supper in the hour after Judas

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

left. Humor is used to help the audience focus on the humanity of the situation.

### From out of the past

Now for some local history: New Yorker Joshua Simmons III brought his new bride, Hannah, by steamboat and then wagon to the wilderness of Livonia Township in 1826, traversing the wilds of Farmington Township along the way.

While Joshua spent his first night in Livonia in a dritale with their household goods, which the wagon masters had unloaded on the ground, Han-

nah rested comfortably a mile away at the Farmington home of a Mr. Thayer.

Throughout their lives, the pioneering Livonia couple developed many ties to Farmington. Their farmstead still stands as part of Greenmead Historical village on Eight Mile Road west of Halsted, along the border of the two communities.

The many ties these Livonia people had with their neighbors to the north are the subject of the latest Farmington Hills Historical Commission display in the glass case outside the city council chamber in the City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

The display runs through April.

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