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Farmington Observer

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Festival really means business



The Farmington Founders Festival is here, and downtown merchants have been oiling up their cash registers. The annual event is viewed by many as a boon to the local economy.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington's Founders Festival comes but once a year. Once is not enough for downtown businesses, while some residents enjoy the 360 or so days in between.

The 31st-annual festival started Sunday with a chicken barbecue dinner at Masonic Temple. It runs through Saturday, July 15, in downtown Farmington and environs. The Founders Day parade Saturday morning along Grand River Avenue highlights this standby of small-town merrymaking.

The festival draws thousands of visitors through downtown, and that rings up a nice tune on cash registers.

During last year's festival, patrons were lined up to the staircase at the Grand Cafe in the basement of the renovated Cook Building. The mere recollection brings a smile to the face of the owner's wife.

"We're trying to get ready and get everything packed in," said Camille Sakuta, who is also day manager at the Grand Cafe. "We're swamped."

Farmington Bakery owner Drako Mitrikeski plans to rent two or three

coffee machines to handle the deluge of customers. The bakery sells 300 cups an hour on parade morning alone.

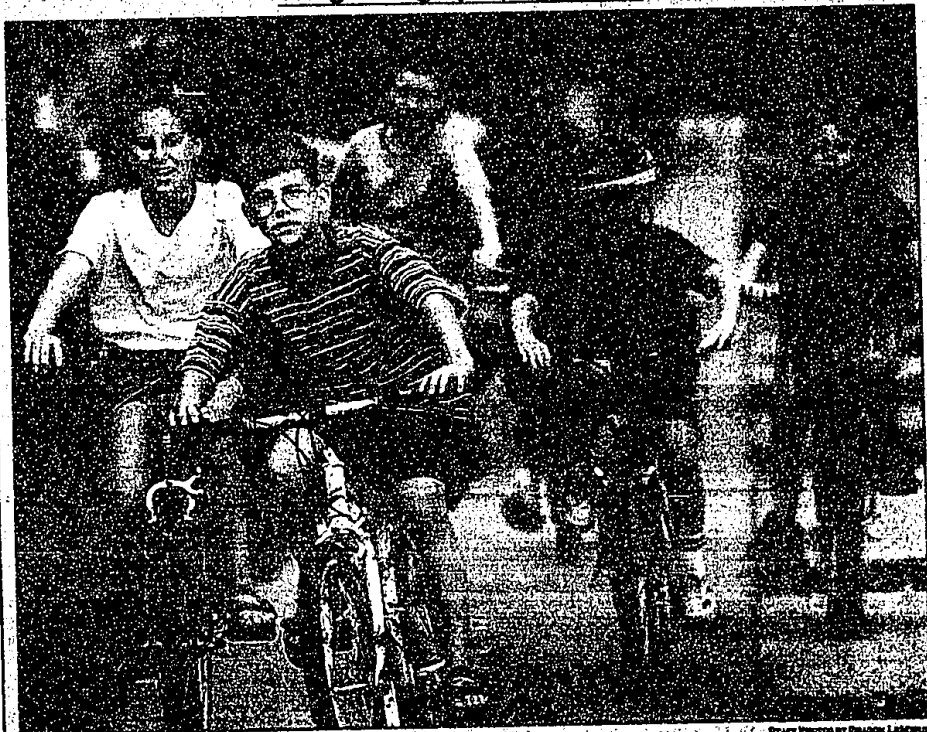
Cookies and spinach pies are hot sellers, too. They'll start making cookie dough today and Tuesday in preparation, Mitrikeski said.

"It's hard to produce everything," he said. "Those are my best days. Packli, Christmas . . . nothing can compare."

"I'm really happy I have a downtown location. This is where all the

See FESTIVAL, 2A

Young bikers get pumped for safety



Headed for downtown: Bikers (from left) Laura Giovannini, Jeff Fischer, Megan Early, Alice Early, Brad Stahl ride for downtown Farmington.

Experts urge riders to get a handle on bicycle safety

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When it comes to bicycle safety, advocates say the message cannot be judged hard enough.

John Reed, part owner of Farmington Bikes and Supply Shop, puts it into perspective. He compares the hazardous ride conditions here on Oakland Lake between 19 and 14 Mile roads.

"The 90 mph, 12' wind," Reed said. "Can you imagine riding on a bike?"

Shoppers have little choice but to go with the local flow. Shoppers can be leghobbled and the situation less desirable.

They should use their hands, Reed said. One of the best ways is to wear a helmet.

Bicyclist headgear ranges \$20-\$120. No matter the price, most meet mandatory safety requirements, said J.P. Merchant, a sales associate at D and D Bicycles in Farmington Hills.

More expensive ones are likely to be more colorful, aerodynamic and are lighter. They also offer better ventilation, Merchant said.

Farmington resident Alice Early can speak to the preventative benefits of helmets. Her son, Michael, 10, was riding in a black party bicycle parade when he accidentally bumped into another rider.

He flew off his bike, hitting his head and cutting his lip. His helmet prevented serious injury.

See SPORTS, 2A



Anticipation: Bicyclist Brad Stahl awaits his treat at the Silver Dairy.

Power residents push to preserve pastoral setting

BY BILL CONTANT
STAFF WRITER

Residents on pastoral Power Road north of 11 Mile in Farmington Hills are pushing for a less dense zoning that will preserve the country character of their Natural Beauty Road.

"I would say that we stand a good chance," said by Karnicky, a 22-year resident of the area that was designated as a Natural Beauty Road eight months ago.

Residents will submit a preliminary rezoning request at the Farmington Hills Planning Commission meeting Thursday. Commissioners will likely have a public hearing on the issue at their regular August meeting.

The proposal would change the zoning from RA-1 to RA-1A. The current RA-1 zoning calls for lot

minimums of 90 by 120 feet. The RA-1A zoning would enlarge that minimum to 33,000 square feet, make the frontage requirement 140 feet and lessen the density from 1.8 houses per acre to 1.3 per acre.

City Planner Ed Gardiner said the planning commission will take into consideration the land use, existing zoning, surrounding zoning and use when making a decision.

"The compatibility with surrounding zoning is important," Gardiner said.

Residents along Power north of 11 Mile are trying to change the zoning, in part, to lessen the impact of a proposed 41-house development on the west side of the road that would more than double the number of houses along the winding, gravel road.

At a meeting in May, planning commissioners

rejected the development plan because it would create traffic and safety problems, had unusable open space and land use that was not consistent with a Natural Beauty Road. But commission Chairman Jett VanHouten told residents that the project met zoning guidelines.

That prompted residents to ask for a rezoning more compatible with the nearby Blidstone Woods subdivision, which is zoned RA-1A.

Kernicky said that area had once been part of the village of Quakertown. The Power Road area north of 11 Mile was once Freeville.

"We've got maps to prove this was all Powerville," he said. "One is dated 1830."

Kernicky said the residents have the support of

See POWER, 2A