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IN THE PAPER
TODAY

Magazine: Schools good as gold



Farmington school officials are beaming over a magazine report that granted 'gold medal' status to the public school district. Only five Michigan districts were so honored.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Supporters of education put the gold into a "gold medal" school district. Farmington Public Schools was one of five districts statewide and one of 44 in the nation to be cited in a recent issue of Expansion Management magazine as a gold medal system.

The magazine looked at school districts in communities where companies might consider it desirable to expand or relocate. Farmington ranked only behind Birmingham in the publication's educational quotient score. Public

schools in Novi, Midland and Dearborn also received gold medal status. Some 300 districts were measured by such things as community support, resources, and student performance. Expansion Management magazine is a bimonthly/trade journal based in Boulder, Colo., that examines corporate trends. "This is one of those things that came out of the blue," said Superintendent Bob Adams, who found out Farmington had been selected by talking to the state and schools superintendent.

"I think it's wonderful. It's nice to have that kind of thing that is not all tied into the educational system." The community's interest and support of education was based on education and income levels of residents. The median family income in Farmington was \$52,662, according to 1990 U.S. Census statistics, and \$63,101 in Farmington Hills. Of 51,514 people over 24 years of age in Farmington Hills, 13,656 have bachelor's degrees and 7,977 have graduate or professional degrees, according to the census.

See GOLD MEDAL, 2A



Pet peeves: Farmington Hills' Ranae Vinson sees nothing wrong with raising rabbits and chickens. But some of her neighbors and a few city officials don't share her views. /3A

Many promises kept: Every year, Farmington Area Goodfellows make a pledge: No child or senior citizen without a Christmas. /3A

Diversity doings: The Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Committee is planning an honors event for early next year. /6A

BUSINESS

Business moves: The Observer's Business Milestones column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings, openings and other business moves with a Farmington-area connection. /10A

TASTE

Festival of Light: Celebrate Hanukkah with festive dishes sure to please everyone. /1B
Pop the cork: Wine auctions are a fun way to buy wine. And sometimes it's to benefit a good cause. /1B

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

From the inside out: New shapewear promises to hold the key to looking good in body-hugging holiday styles. /9F

SPORTS

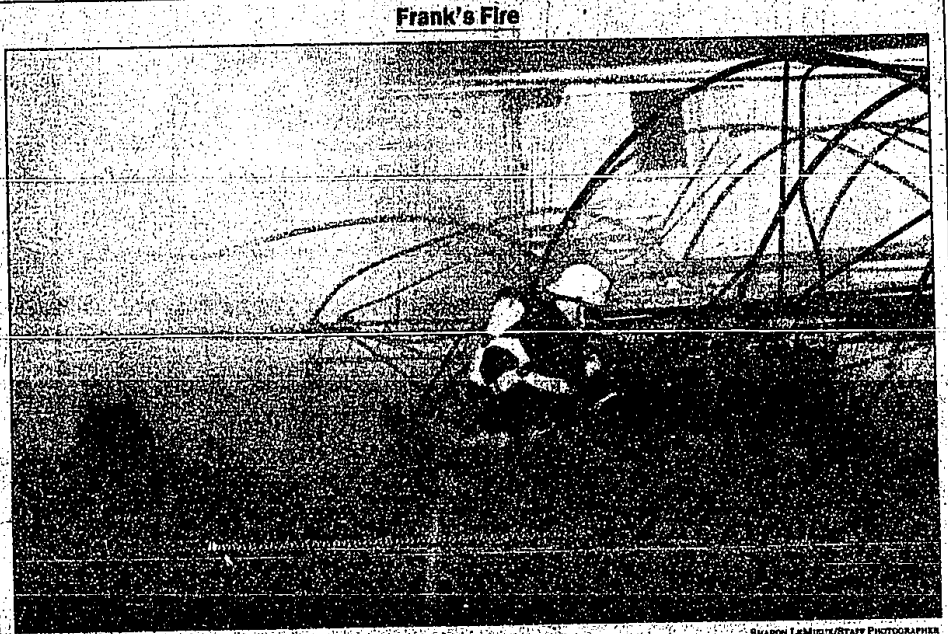
Hoop hopes: Harrison coach Mike Teachman hopes last year's youth movement pays off in boys basketball this year. /1C
Cagey seniors: Farmington High is counting on six seniors to lead the Falcons in the 1995-96 basketball season. /1C

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Frank's Fire

Storage area destroyed: Farmington Public Safety officers with assistance from Farmington Hills fire and police fight a blaze Saturday afternoon that destroyed all of the contents in a storage facility at Frank's Nursery and Crafts on Mooney Street, near Grand River and Orchard Lake Road.

Fire chars holiday stock at Frank's

BY LARRY PALADINO
STAFF WRITER

A fire destroyed a Frank's Nursery and Crafts storage facility Saturday afternoon causing an estimated \$100,000 worth of damage, a company official said. There were no injuries reported.

Firefighters from Farmington and Farmington Hills responded within five minutes of a store employee's

911 emergency call, said Paul Lamontaine, assistant vice president of facilities for the company. However, fire personnel couldn't save the nursery-style structure that had a clear plastic roof. The store is at Grand River and Orchard Lake Road.

The 26-foot by 48-foot building contained fresh wreaths and other Christmas-season decorative materials, which were all destroyed in the fire, he said. The structure was behind the store's outdoor nursery.

"Off the top of my head I'd say the damage was \$100,000," Lamontaine said. "It'll cost \$50,000 to rebuild the structure."

Peter Baldwin, deputy fire chief for Farmington Hills, said his department's engine and a medical vehicle were at the scene to help out.

There were two pieces of equipment from Farmington Public Safety Department on hand.

As a precautionary measure, firefighters evacuated a nearby apartment complex in case there was any toxic fumes due to materials that were kept in the storage area. None were reported.

See FIRE, 2A

March trial date set in hit-run case

BY BILL HOCKMAN
STAFF WRITER

An Oakland County Circuit Court judge has set a March 8 trial date in the case of a Detroit man accused of the drunken driving killing of a 13-year-old Farmington Hills boy.

Christopher Phillip Smith Jr., 22, is charged with drunk driving, leaving the scene of a fatal accident and manslaughter in connection with the Sept. 25 death of David Klenke, who was hit by a car as he rode his bike on

10 Mile Road. Smith is being held in the Oakland County Jail in lieu of a \$1 million cash bond. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

The trial date was set Friday during a short pretrial hearing before Judge Rudy Nichols. Smith stood handcuffed and clad in orange jail issue clothes as his attorney, Elias Escobedo, and Assistant Prosecutor Marc Barron whispered with Nichols, who then set the trial date. Smith

also asked for special visitation privileges to see his infant son.

"I hate to have to put the family of the child through this, and I hate to have to put my client's family through this (trial)," said Escobedo, who said he's still hopeful that an agreement can be reached before the case goes to trial.

But Klenke's mother has said that she wants the case to go to trial, even while she admitted that it would be hard on her family.

David Klenke and his brother Stephen, 11, were riding their bikes on the shoulder of the road at about 7:24 p.m. when an eastbound car struck and killed David. Stephen was not injured.

Police said David was hit by the right side of the car and thrown onto the windshield. The driver then fled, police said.

Smith was arrested later that night. Witnesses identified both Smith and his damaged car.

6 applicants vie for vacant council seat

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills City Council will be a complete set Dec. 11 after its seventh member has been chosen.

Council members will interview six applicants — Ben Miesha, Dennis Fitzgerald, Jody Horowitz, Marko Marks, Richard Corey and Barry Brickner — for the opening at the regular Monday meeting and vote until a selection is made.

The six applicants include the two candidates who did not win a seat during the election, two candidates who see the job as an interim position, and two challengers who are familiar with city politics. Marks, a former mayor and city council member,

was an also-ran in the recent election, finishing fourth behind Terry Sever. With 29 years of community service, Marks believes he's the most qualified.

"I think that they should pick someone who has had the courage to go out and run," Marks said. "It wasn't like those other people couldn't have run."

The retired builder would be cautious on land use issues, make it easier for the public to get involved in those decisions, and using zoning to help keep traffic problems to a minimum.

Marks said he would run for re-election in August if he were appointed. Fitzgerald, who finished last in the race in his first try at elected office in November, also said he would run if appointed.

"I would run if I were appointed," said the Joe Arena Advisory Committee chairman. "If you aren't appointed, you are looking at running against an incumbent in August and then again a year later."

Fitzgerald would want a study of a parks millage renewal, would work to have city departments review all revenue sources, study with adjoining communities, traffic improvements, plan to re-allocate debt service dollars that will be available in 1998-99, form a charter commission.

Corey, a professional business consultant and zoning board of appeals member, also has given lengthy service to the city on various committees.

See VACANCY, 5A