

# Farmington Observer

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IN THE PAPER

## TODAY

**Off to court:** A Detroit woman has been bound over to Circuit Court for the armed robbery of the McDonald's restaurant in Farmington Hills. /6A

## TASTE

**Just Peachy:** Readers share peach recipes in the spirit of "James and the Giant Peach" now showing at metro Detroit movie theaters. /1B

## MALLS & MAINSTREETS

**Retail careers:** Professionals discuss the ups and downs of working in retail with students from Madonna University's merchandising program. /10A

## SPORTS

**On the ball:** Farmington is enjoying a fast start in varsity baseball, winning its first five games. /1C

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## Hills group peddles helmet law



Should Farmington Hills require young bicyclists to wear helmets? Some officials think so, but another wondered if government wasn't "getting too involved in people's lives."

By BILL COULTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills could be one of the first cities in Michigan to have an ordinance requiring bicyclists age 16 and younger to wear helmets. Members of the city's Commission on Children, Youth and Families made the case for the ordinance as a

way to save lives.

"It's frightening to me that when my children played baseball they had to wear a helmet, but I never gave it a second thought while they were riding bicycles," said Commission Chairman Dick Daguanno.

Daguanno cited statistics showing the high cost of head injuries to bicy-

clists in terms of money and lives. About 250 children 14 and under are killed each year out of 900 total bicycle deaths. Head injuries account for 70-80 percent of fatal injuries, he said.

"Governments are never as noble as when they move to protect the most valuable assets — our youth," he said.

Commission member and school board Trustee Cathy Webb agreed. She said if the city council enacts the ordinance, the schools would be able to do their part in preparing children

for the change before the school year ends.

"We could then use the schools as a vehicle to get the information to them and the schools before school ends," she said.

Fred Dore, president of Working Wheelers Cycling Club of West Bloomfield, said the ordinance puts the responsibility on parents, but would waive any fine if a violator or his parent agrees to buy and wear a helmet.

Thirteen states have helmet ordi-

See HELMET, 2A

### Biting the bar at Farmington High



**Track practice:** Farmington High senior Keith Sudheimer seems to be taking a bite out of the high jump bar — an elastic foam bar used in practice. Sudheimer cleared 6-foot-6 in an indoor track meet recently. For results of high school contests, see the Observer Sports Section.

## Tranchida plea bargains in murder of OU student

By MARGARET O'BRIEN  
STAFF WRITER

Families touched by the tragedy and media attention surrounding the death of Oakland University student Tina Biggar last summer were spared the emotional strain of a trial when Southfield native Kenneth Ray Tranchida, 42, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder last week.

In a rare plea bargain agreement with the Oakland County Prosecutor's office, charges were lowered from premeditated first-degree murder in exchange for the guilty plea.

Tranchida told Oakland Circuit Judge Rudy Nichols Wednesday that he was responsible for the death of the 23-year-old Biggar.

"I pushed her where she hit her head," Tranchida said in court about the day last August when Biggar visited the room he rented in a house in southwestern Southfield.

Nichols will sentence Tranchida May 10. He could get up to life in prison but could be eligible for parole in 16 years, according to the plea bargain agreement.

First-degree murder carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison.

Prosecutors expect Tranchida will get a long sentence based on the circumstances of the crime and the fact that he is pleading guilty to being a fourth-offense habitual offender.

Tranchida said in earlier written statements to police that Biggar complained about her financial difficulties the morning of her death.

He told police that that prompted him to grab her by the shoulders and she fell backward and hit her head on a safe. In his written statement, he said he didn't want to see her suffer.

The plea bargain, especially in such a high profile murder case, is unusual in Oakland County. But Prosecutor Richard Thompson said he made an exception out of consideration for the Biggar family.

"They said the very survival of their family depended on not having the lurid details repeated in court," Thompson said about testimony in the preliminary hearing that said Biggar had been working as a prostitute for several months through two local escort services.

Biggar's father, U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. William Biggar, has declined to comment about the plea. However, he is expected to make a statement at Tranchida's sentencing.

Tranchida's family may also make statements. See PLEA, 4A

## Case closed: Detective solves most crimes



Officer Chris Guinan  
Farmington's Officer of the Year

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

A good sleuth knows the trail often leads back to an accomplice.

Farmington Public Safety Officer Christine Guinan is a detective and, according to her peers, one good cop. Guinan has been selected the department's Public Safety Officer of the Year for 1995.

The silent partner in her crime fighting success? A guy named "Zeke," who supplied some encouragement when she needed it the most, Guinan said.

"When I first came here back in 1987, there were a lot of people in this department who thought I'd never ever make it as a police officer," said Guinan, who has worked in the detective bureau four years.

"If it wasn't for 'Zeke,' Officer (Hilton) Hyde, I wouldn't be here today," Guinan joined the Farmington de-

partment after short stint working in juvenile corrections. She didn't enjoy that, so she thought her Criminal Justice/Psychology degree from Grand Valley State would be better suited for police work.

Things weren't clicking at first, Guinan said. She began to doubt herself as much as those did around her.

"I was ready to give up myself," she said, "and Zeke was like, 'Chris you can do it. I have confidence in you. You have the ability. Go for it.'"

"After that, I was fine."

But the criminal element has found it rough.

Since she's been a detective, Guinan has closed more than 600 cases. She completes investigations in an average of two days, department officials said.

Some are open and shut, but others require diligence and persistence.

One example is the recent sexual assault case involving a 16-year-old

girl victim in a parking lot near T.J. Maxx downtown. A naked man with a stocking over his face attacked the girl while she was in-line skating.

All police had to go on was a description of the attacker's vehicle and cigarette butts left at the scene. Several weeks of tracking down leads turned up little.

"We were ready to give up," Guinan said.

A break in the case came after West Bloomfield police arrested a man for exposing himself in front of a hospital. Through Guinan's work, they were able to link him to the Farmington rape and an arrest was made.

She enjoys that part of detective work: Starting out with a few crumbs of information and building on it enough to make an arrest.

"She is probably one of the hardest working officers we have," Public

See DETECTIVE, 3A

### Bring on the bagels!

The challenge: An open contest to determine who makes the best bagels in metro Detroit. The reward: A \$5,000 check paid directly to the winner's charity of choice. The initiator: Charley Kaye of The Bean & Bagel Restaurants.

As of last Friday, however, no other bagel-maker in metro Detroit has been willing to accept Kaye's "Great Bagel Challenge" for charity, which was announced in January and previewed in the Observer's Arts & Entertainment section March 7.

"I feel too many businesses have no problem taking all they can from the communities they serve," said Kaye, whose Bean & Bagel headquarters are on Maple Road in West Bloomfield and who has a retail location at Farmington Road and 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

"I want to give something back as thanks for all the support I've been given," he said. "The 'Great Bagel Challenge' is a way to raise money for chari-

### FARMINGTON FOCUS

ty and have some fun at the same time."

Even if there are no takers, the challenge will be held Saturday, April 27, at a location to be announced. Kaye's \$5,000 has been earmarked for the Clarke School for the Deaf. Judges will be Detroit-area media personalities. Bagels will be judged on freshness, flavor, texture, size and creativity.

The contest is open to bagel chains, franchisees, bakeries and other bagel outlets. For more information, call the Bean & Bagel corporate office at 932-8914.

### A week for volunteers

Did you know that the week of April 21-27 is National Volunteer Week? Well it is!

And Farmington Hills' Commission on Children, Youth and Families will honor volun-

teers at a program beginning at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 25, at the Costick Activities Center, 11 Mile Road east of Middlebelt.

Diana Lewis, Farmington Hills resident and anchorwoman from WXYZ-TV Channel 7, will be the featured speaker. Refreshments will be served and displays from local agencies will be available for viewing.

Anyone who volunteers in the Farmington area is invited to attend. Representatives of local agencies who wish to participate should contact Kim Healy at 473-1813.

### See Miss Farmington

Audrie Chernauskas, the reigning Miss Farmington, will be one of the guests on the hour-long John Akouri cable TV show at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 25, on INFO-TV12 (Channel 12 on the Time Warner cable system in the Farmington area).

See FOCUS, 2A