

Farmington Observer

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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Pop-top capitalism: A group of Harrison High School students are honing their business skills, while helping a couple of local charities. /A2

Election doings: Several important election-related events are coming up this week. They're listed in Farmington Focus. /A2

What 10 bucks will buy?: Give a man \$10, send him off to the Farmington Founders Festival, and see what he comes back with. /A3

Crafting a festival: What's the Founders Festival all about? Oh, it's things like potholders, fuzzy spiders and bird houses. /A3

TASTE

Microbrews: Since a 1992 law allowing licensed brewpubs in Michigan was passed, a number of them have opened including the Royal Oak Brewery. /1B

Taste Buds: There's no need to dirty saucepans or skillets when you prepare dinner on the grill. /1B

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Lunch loot goes plastic

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Lunch money could turn to plastic under a plan being considered by Farmington Public Schools in cooperation with Metro Bank.

Instead of cash, children would use a coded "cave card" — similar to those used in automatic teller machines — to buy lunch. A cafeteria cashier would run the card through a machine and a debit of \$1.75 is posted on the family's checking account.

A similar electronic method is being used in Fenton Area Public Schools.

Both the district and the bank are looking into the possibility, a bank spokesman said.

"Everything at this point is under investigation," Metro Bank's Jerry Wasen said. "It's not a done deed, not on our part or the schools' part."

Interest is keen, though. District and bank officials conducted an informational meeting with parents at Gill Elementary School. Only three parents turned out but said they liked the idea, a district spokeswoman said.

Such a program would speed up lunch lines and cut down on the number of checks that need to be processed by the district, said Business office spokeswoman Mary Reynolds.

Parents can pay \$35 in advance, which covers a certain number of their child's lunches for a month. Children on free or reduced lunch programs would also have confidentiality under a cashless system, Reynolds said. All cards would look the same.

More than likely, a cave card system would be tested at one of the district's 14 elementary buildings. If successful, the district may consider trying it at the secondary level.

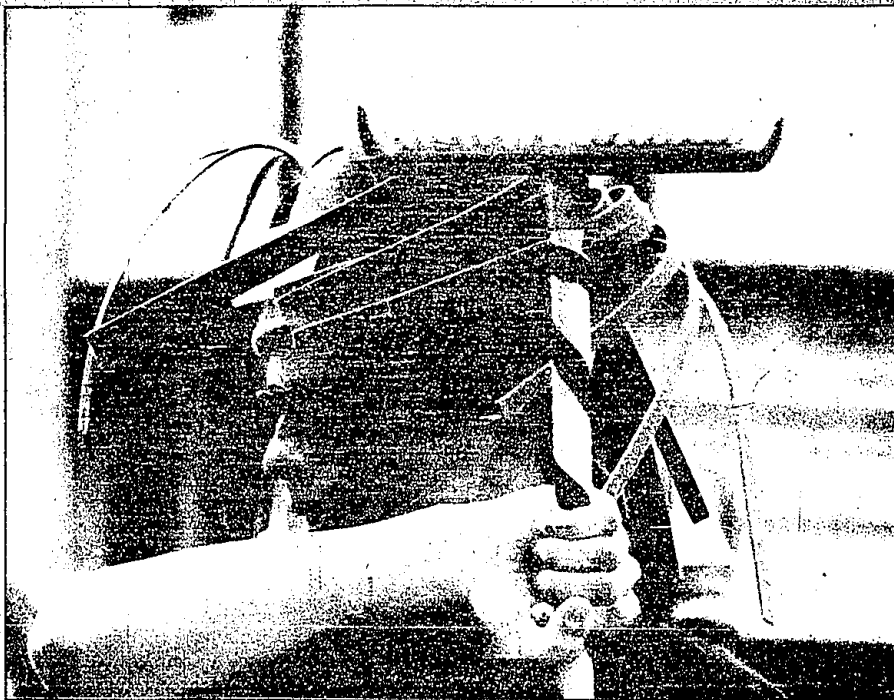
"As a parent, you never know where that \$10 or \$5 actually went," Reynolds said. "Did it go across the street to the party store?"

The cashless lunch program has been a success in Fenton, a school official there said.

The district has an arrangement with State Bank of Fenton where students at three elementary schools use "Moolah Moolah" cards to pay for lunch.

"In the long run, it has helped us tremendously by making the lines shorter and us handling less money," said Esther Alderman, an assistant in administrative office.

Wax'n' and walk'n' along Festival Parade route



Coming clean: Mickey Owen, 15, of Farmington, son of Mark and Holly Owen, owners of Colonial Car Wash on Nine Mile acts as drum major for a corp of scrubbers. Colonial Car Wash won first place for commercial float.

Our parade: 'Watch it!'



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Who loves a parade? Several thousand people who crowded the streets of downtown Farmington for the annual Founders Festival Parade Saturday, that's who.

Along with the pageantry of bands and floats, the Farmington Founders Festival Parade offers those sitting or standing at curbside a chance to march down memory lane.

"It's such a neat part of the community," said parade-goer Ed Michalak of Farmington Hills, who occupied one of the coveted seats on Grand River with wife Mary and daughter Emily.

"People gather here a year and a half," he said. "It's the highlight of summer."

This year, Saturday's parade was the 22nd. Attendance was estimated at 5,000, which is an increase over last year.

Though humid, 80-degree temperatures were more palatable than last year's level 90's heat that kept people away.

Many in attendance were like the Michalaks, who view the parade as a rite of living in the Farmington area. For them, it's a tradition.

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A 1981 Farmington High graduate who has since moved to Lansing wouldn't miss the parade or the festival for anything, she said.

"I've been coming to this parade since I was 6. It's a tradition," said Mary Sorenson (Woldt), who drove from Lansing with husband Tim and children Cameron, 8, and Kyle, 10 months.

Tradition also brought many political hopefuls out to work the crowd. Campaign workers doled out free potato chips, Tootsie Rolls, bottle openers, emery boards and balloons — along with "I Heart Me" — to candidates in state House, county circuit court and public health races.

Those weren't limited to campaigning for office. Those who were in business offered their own prizes.

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Over the rim: Sheridan Cassidy, 18 months, peers over her shades.

day's Founders Festival Parade passed.

"It's kid friendly," said Heather who was with his wife Heidi and three children, Kevin, 4, Ryan, 2, and Derek, 1 month.

Parade went Robin L. (far left) 800-6730 firefighters while holding son Evan, 3, during the Festival Parade in 1995. Photo taken by the author from an elevated position on the Village Mall.

