

Farmington Observer

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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

IN THE PAPER
TODAY

Teen scene: By all accounts, Sunday's Family Fest at the William Costick Center provided a successful start for the Farmington Hills Youth Program. /A3

OPINION

School's In! And the kids are out, en masse, as Farmington-area schools open this week. Some mental adjustments must be made by motorists. /A14

Write on! The Observer's letters columns are filled with interesting opinions. /A14

SPORTS

Grid preview: Farmington Harrison still has plenty of talent as it prepares to make a run at a fourth straight Western Lakes football championship. /1C

On the rebound: Farmington Hills Mercy anticipates a better year in girls basketball with a veteran team returning for the 1996 season. /1C

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Spanish on cable? No, señor

A Spanish language channel on cable TV? What a treat, say some Time Warner subscribers. But Spanish won't be part of the cable lineup anytime soon, officials say.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Those who say "si" want to see Spanish-language TV. So far, though, all they've heard is "no, señor." Time Warner Cable, which serves Farmington and Farmington Hills as well as Novi, does not have Univision or any other Spanish-speaking stations in its channel line-up.

Things are not looking good for Spanish on cable, even though the cable system is undergoing a fiber optic upgrade to expand capacity 70 to 80. Results are still being tabulated from a customer survey as to what new channels they'd like to see, a Time Warner spokesman said. The new channel line-up has not been finalized, though it's likely to

include ESPN 2, History and Bravo channels, Court TV, Learning Channel and Home and Garden Channel have already been added to the line-up for Farmington-area subscribers. Univision or like Spanish-speaking station didn't finish in the top-10 in a similar survey done in Livonia, said Tom Bjorklund, Time Warner's regional vice-president.

"Like we've told the cable commission, Univision is not been one of those services we're asked for a lot," Bjorklund said.

Novi resident Luis Mejia has marshaled others — including Spanish teachers and students — in asking

Time Warner officials to reconsider.

Mejia has brought up the matter during public comment at Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission, which overrules the franchise agreement between the cities and Time Warner.

After several meetings and phone calls, Mejia has come to one conclusion: "They don't want to do it," he said.

Exposure to native speakers and the Spanish culture is important for students learning the language, teachers said. Especially, since there

See SPANISH, A2



Whore in the world . . . ?
A global perspective: Meredith Perish, a Michigan State University and Farmington Harrison graduate, points out the New Nation of Turkmenistan, where she's heading as a member of the Peace Corps. For a story and more photos, please see the Community Life Section.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS LEWIS

Raise OK'd for custodian subs

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Board of Education gave a raise to substitute custodians, but the request made trustees brittle with curiosity.

Starting this school year, substitute custodians will receive \$8.75 an hour. The previous rate was \$7.30, which was well behind the average \$8.62 rate paid by school districts in the tri-county area.

At the Aug. 19 meeting, the board approved the \$1.45 an hour increase 5-1 in a voice vote with trustee Bobbie Feldman voting no. Trustee Joe Svokos was absent.

The pay-raise is needed to maintain a pool of up to 15 substitute custodians on a daily basis, said Personnel Director Larry Lobert. A trustee wanted to know if there's an absenteeism problem.

"There are some areas where we are concerned," said Sue Zurvalc, assistant superintendent of Employee Relations. But no, Zurvalc added, absenteeism among custodians is not a problem.

Subs are needed to cover for sick days and vacations of the 125 regularly employed custodians. Hallways, restrooms and cafeterias are cleaned daily, but other building areas are maintained on an every-other-day basis.

When there is a shortage, custodians can only "police" areas that need to be cleaned, said another assistant superintendent.

"If we don't have a sub, it could go for two days or someone has to work on overtime," said Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for Finance.

Substitute custodians in Bloomfield district are paid \$8.50 while those in Novi schools receive \$10 an hour. A survey was conducted of more than 40 districts in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties, Lobert said.

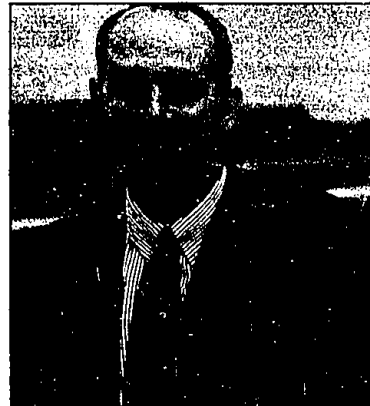
Substitutes, who are not part of the custodial bargaining unit, work in various districts in the area.

If the hourly rate is too low, districts have to compete with other service sector jobs where there is a shortage of people to fill them, Lobert said.

Farmington resident August Blomquist wanted to pin down an exact figure on what the raise will cost the district overall. Blomquist came up with a figure of \$30,000 to \$40,000, basing the \$1.45 an hour increase by an average of 15 employees and by 2,000 hours a year.

"You're in the ball park," Cannon said.

His job: Keep order in 47th District Court



David Walsh

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Hanging on David Walsh's 47th District Court office wall is a picture of him finishing the Detroit Marathon, with fat raised.

Walsh, 35, who began last week as the court's new administrator, is prepared for a marathon, but has some shorter goals as well.

Most immediate personally, will be the birth of a new baby. Walsh and his wife Theresa have a daughter Jessica, 3 1/2. In terms of his job, the Rochester Adams High and Eastern Michigan University graduate is taking stock of the court's records and finances.

"I was very happy with the Ann Arbor court," he said of his eight-year job as deputy court administrator with the Ann Arbor Circuit Court. "The more I checked, the more I found that this was a great opportunity. This court has a very good reputation."

Walsh said he wants to keep up the court's tradition and continue the work of his predecessor, John Grewell, who died of cancer in March.

"My expectation is that we will be a model district court," he said. "We have two hard-working judges and a very good staff."

Walsh, who grew up in New Jersey before

his family moved to Michigan during his junior year in high school, said he had a great situation in Ann Arbor.

"But I saw a lot of potential in an already top-flight district court," he said.

One of the main goals will be to see that cases are managed in the most efficient way possible. Walsh said providing good access to information, completing cases in a timely fashion, dealing with the public fairly, being accountable and gaining the public's trust and confidence are areas that define a court's success.

And when the court is accomplishing those goals, it is important that the public knows it, he said.

"Sometimes courts do a bad job of letting people know how well we're doing," he said.

Judges Fred Harris and Marla Parker have been helped over the past year by a visiting judge one day a week. But the workload is still higher than many courts, Walsh said.

"We also have a lot of demands on our staff, because so much of the work is clerically processed," he said.

Part of the problem for this and other courts is that the state's court system has not adequately adapted to the changes in

See WALSH, A2

Talking trash

Residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills take note: Refuse, recycling and yard waste will not be collected in the Farmington area on Monday, Sept. 2, because of the Labor Day holiday.

All trash and recycling collections that week will take place a day later than usual. For further information, call 473-9518.

Tag Day is coming up

An important two days are coming up for local high school instrumental music departments. The annual Tag Day fund-raiser to benefit the three high school instrumental music programs in the Farmington area will be Friday-Saturday, Sept. 6-7.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

On those days, Friday evening and Saturday afternoon, band and orchestra students from Farmington, Harrison and North Farmington high schools will be in uniform or concert attire at various sites throughout the area asking for donations to support their music programs.

For a donation, the giver will receive a ticket for an upcoming Band-O-Rama concert.

All about Botsford Hospital

Sandy Bauman will speak on opportunities and services available at Botsford General

Hospital at a breakfast meeting of the Interagency Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 5, at the Longacre House, 24706 Farmington Road. The event is open to the public.

The Interagency Council is an umbrella group for Farmington-area organizations. Other meetings will be held Nov. 7, Jan. 2, March 6 and May 1. For more information about the group, call Mark Jensen, North Congregational Church, 848-1750.

News for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 32411 Grand River, Farmington 48338; faxed to 477-9722; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address is packy@ocoonline.com.