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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Bin there: Farmington Hills City Council delved into trying to pass a Dumpster ordinance. /A6

Double duty: Farmington Hills Deputy Police Chief Mirl Spencer is making foray into politics. /A8

Agent address: An FBI agent gave the lowdown on her work to children at a Farmington Hills elementary school. /A15

Hills hot for high-tech hiring



Farmington Hills-based Compuware Corporation will create 1,200 jobs — mostly in software programming positions — in the next three to five years.

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Just call it Silicon Valley Jr. Farmington Hills will receive even more high-technology business when the Compuware Corporation creates more than 1,200 local jobs in the next three to five years, as it recently announced. The majority will be software programming positions.

"We're excited to increase our presence here," said Chris Norris, director of corporate communications at Compuware. "These are all very high-level, high-tech jobs, and will be beneficial for the state, the company, and the community."
"We have a number of national, international, and foreign-owned firms here," said Jody Soronen, president of the Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce. "I think we're known for having a family of fine firms."
"Obviously, Compuware settled here because they like the area."

An international supplier of software products and informational services, Compuware has been headquartered locally since the company's founding in 1973. It is now one of the 16 largest independent software companies in the world, with revenues approaching three-quarters of a billion dollars.

The Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) is partly to thank for this mighty growth spurt. Begun in 1995, this board has awarded millions in tax credits to various state companies.

Its latest grant is \$5.9 million to Compuware, which was reportedly considering making the jobs available in Columbus, Ohio.

But Norris doesn't see the MEGA credits as any unethical or unfair influence to keep the work in-state.

"I think that this is as far removed from corporate welfare as you could think of," he said. "I never really even thought about it in that con-

See HIGH-TECH, A2

OPINION

Fact check: We give our views on a Farmington Hills state House candidate who once again finds his credentials in question. /A16

Compassionate flame: The Torch Drive provides a helping hand to those in need. The Observer believes their efforts deserve community wide support. /A16

COMMUNITY LIFE

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A doggone good ditty



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEWIS

Tumbleweed tune: Farmington Hills fire inspector Dennis Hughes sings "Get Down, Get Low, Get Out" as part of a fire safety awareness skit. The department's open house is noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 6.

Wild West skits spur fire safety awareness

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The west was wild for some Farmington Hills elementary students who learned some fire safety lessons last week.

First and second graders at Highmeadow Common Campus took the "active listening position" while Hills firefighters performed a

little skit based on the theme of this year's National Fire Prevention Week: "Let's Hear it for Fire Safety: Test Your Detectors."

Lt. Mike Garr, Battalion Chief Don St. Clair and Inspector Dennis Hughes provided the pratfalls and one-liners to the children while delivering a message on fire safety. This year's show, "Deputy Dash Dakota and Clint Driftwood," fea-

tured a western theme. Garr played the straight man asking questions of a famous fire "marshal" from Texas, "Clint Driftwood." The Texan, played by Hughes, donned chaps, boots, a cowboy hat and an accent as thick as mesquite barbecue sauce.
Trying to encourage the students with the importance of doing well in school, Driftwood said he'd got-

ten straight As.
"My B's were a little crooked," he added.

After Driftwood introduced several helpers, all played by St. Clair, the message that having and keeping a working smoke detector in the home came through.

Helped by such characters as

See FIRE SAFETY, A3

Police probe report of school van driver hitting impaired boy

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police believe that a young, hearing-impaired student was hit by the driver of the van that takes him to school.

Police have presented evidence to the Oakland County prosecutors that a driver for Northline Transportation hit Todd Leal, 9, while he was being taken to the Center School in Bloomfield Hills.

A woman driving behind the van witnessed the incident, followed the van and contacted police.

The service picks up students from the area, including Farmington Hills, and takes them to the special school.

"We're waiting for the police to complete their investigation," said Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent with the Farmington Public Schools. "But there are no Farmington schools students being driven to school by that driver now."

The boy's mother Katrina said her son confirmed that he had been hit in the head with a book belonging to another student while seated in the van Sept. 25.

"My son said it happened before," she said.

Hills police Detective Sandra Rochford said there have been other problems, including complaints about the driver's driving.

Ruth Kocob, whose 7-year-old daughter used to ride on the van, also commented.

"My daughter was pushed and fell down," said Kocob, a Farmington Hills resident. "One of the teachers also complained about his driving."

Kocob said the schools did provide her with a transportation allowance to take her daughter to school for the remaining two months of the school year and have arranged for a different company to take her to school this year.

The company's owner, Mike Headapohl, refused to comment.

Rochford said Oakland County prosecutors would have to determine if and what charges to bring in the case.

Breakfast dishes up sober message

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of prominent area figures turned out for the eighth annual Farmington Families In Action (FFIA) kickoff breakfast at Glen Oaks Country Club Tuesday.

Police chiefs, city managers, school teachers, and even a state representative mingled with 300 community leaders who showed up to mark the start of Sober October,

designated by the FFIA as substance-abuse awareness month.

Gary Goss, Farmington director of Public Safety, opened the breakfast by praising the organization as "a ray of hope."

"Their struggle to prevent drug and alcohol abuse can never be abandoned," he said.

Krogger sponsored the keynote speaker, Kevin Wanzor, whose speech was entitled "Continuing the

Just Say No-tion."

"Congratulations to everyone here this morning," he said. "Most communities don't have this kind of turnout or this kind of support. Be so incredibly proud, because it's going to make a difference."

Wanzor's humorous speech stressed the idea of positive peer pressure, and repeatedly had the crowd roaring.

See KICK-OFF, A3



Kevin Wanzor

A PAL FOR PETS

A friend of Forest Elementary fourth grader Andrew Miller wondered about the feasibility of walking people's dogs to make money. Miller, 10, took the idea a step further: Why not do it to raise money for the Michigan Humane Society?

That was a year and \$1,800 ago. Miller and 75 of his cohorts raised \$1,200 for the Michigan Humane Society at the second annual Walk for Cats and Dogs Sept. 28. Last year, the walk raised \$850. Miller and his partner, Zachary Sklar, walked the mile and a half course with other participants.

"He's got a big heart," said Andrew's mother Marcia Rosen.

Miller has two dogs, a wheaten terrier, "Gizmo," and an Alaskan malamute "Igloo," and a ferret.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

TAKE A HIKE

As the old song goes, "The door is always open and the path is free to walk." Wm. Tyndalo College in Farmington Hills will have its annual fund-raising hike and community picnic Saturday, Oct. 12. The 8-mile walk starts at campus and proceeds through Farmington Hills. This year the college is raising money for scholarships, an upgrade of the computer lab, and for a new library.

FASHIONS GALORE

Looking for something special to wear this fall? Well then the Novi Hilton is the place to be Monday, Oct. 7, as the annual fashion show to benefit Langcree House takes place 10 a.m. to noon. Fashions will be supplied by Liz Claiborne, Twelve Oaks Mall, and Coranite & Offen Furs of Birmingham. Tickets are \$35, which include lunch, show, cheese and fruit. For tickets, call Tina Jensen at 478-7017.

STRIKE UP THE BAND

The annual Farmington High homecoming parade takes place 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 6, along Shilohwasee Street and Farmington Road. The 120-member Falcon marching band leads the way with floats and other pre-football hoopla. Farmington High takes on Plymouth-Salem at 1 p.m.