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# Farmington Observer

VOLUME 110 NUMBER 6

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1996

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 66 PAGES

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Dishing dignitaries:** Farmington and Farmington Hills city and school officials joined Olympic gold medalist Sheila Taormina in raising money for Farmington Families in Action at Big Boy restaurant. /A3

**Spirit soars:** A student-operated store at a Farmington Hills middle school is doing big business. /B4

## SPECIAL SECTIONS

**Women in Business:** Among today's newspaper inserts, please look for our annual fall supplement, *Women in Business*, focusing on the array of women who do business in Oakland County.

## SPORTS

**Grid contest:** North Farmington and Farmington High played for pride and bragging rights on the football field Saturday afternoon. /C1

**Title share:** A tie score resulted in Farmington High and North Farmington sharing claim to the city championship in boys soccer. /C1

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STAFF PHOTO BY DEARON LEMIEUX

Listening intently: Itsumi Koga hears a question posed to her by Judge Jessica Cooper through an interpreter during sentencing at Oakland County Circuit Court Thursday.

## Koga: Case closed

Itsumi Koga's sentence brings a close to a court case, but perhaps not the personal anguish that remains ahead.

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Tomayuki Koga's life ended in the early hours of a cool, rainy fall day, much like the one nearly a year later in which his mother was sentenced for taking his life.

During that year, Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Paul Walton and Itsumi Koga's defense attorneys Neil Fink and Carole Stanyar debated the woman's guilt or innocence against the backdrop of her isolation and possible mental illness until her sentencing Oct. 10.

Oakland Circuit Judge Jessica Cooper ordered that Koga complete a minimum of seven months of psychiatric care in an undisclosed Oakland County facility, and then be returned to Japan for further treatment.

Five years of probation with a \$500,000 bond guaranteeing conditions of the probation were also ordered. Koga had pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter but mentally ill.

Koga had been charged on Nov. 6, 1995, with first-degree murder for the drowning death of her 25-day old son sometime between 11 p.m. on Nov. 1 and early Nov. 2.

"There are no easy answers," Judge Cooper told Koga, who waived translation. "For this is pure human tragedy."

"That seemed to sum up a case in which a Japanese woman had come to Farmington Hills to live

See KOGA, A2

## Tragedy could lead mothers to seek help

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County Circuit Judge Jessica Cooper closed the book on the petite Japanese woman's time in court, but left open questions for the legal system, medical community and people in Japan as well as this country about the death of

"baby Koga."

Itsumi Koga, who pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter but mentally ill, may not have yet realized the impact of her actions of Nov. 1-2, 1995 that led to the death of her four-week-old son Tomayuki and her subsequent incarceration and journey through what for her

must have seemed a mystifying judicial and medical system.

"She wants to return to Japan and be with her family," said her attorney, Neil Fink, after Itsumi Koga was led from court and taken to a psychiatric facility where she'll be treated for seven months before returning to Japan.

Koga, 34, suffered from postpartum depression. That, along with a combination of her husband spending long hours at work, her cultural isolation and inability to speak English, led her to commit an irrational act that cost the life of her son.

"This is something that is easily

See ORDEAL, A2

## Boy in critical condition after being hit by van

BY TODD WICKS  
AND LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITERS

A Farmington Hills boy, 12, remained in critical condition Saturday afternoon after he was struck by a vehicle while riding his bike.

Robert Bruno was hit by a van at Grand River and Middlebelt at about 3:45 p.m. Friday, Farmington Hills police said.

The youth was riding his BMX bicycle east of Middlebelt at the time of the accident. While crossing the street, he was hit by a blue van driven by a man traveling eastbound.

The boy experienced severe head trauma and was taken to Botsford Hospital.

He was then moved to William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak where he remained in critical condition Saturday, a hospital spokesman said.

"Alcohol was not believed to have been involved in the accident. An initial investigation also indicates the driver was not at fault, said Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer.

"The youngster darted out in front of the van," Dwyer said. "It doesn't appear the driver was at fault."

The driver was released, pending further investigation.

The identity of the boy was unknown for a time after the accident. A television news report showed a shirt worn by the boy, which was identified by a neighbor, Dwyer said. One of the boy's parents went to the hospital after being notified.

The accident underscores the need for bicyclists to wear helmets, Dwyer said.

"He's got some serious injuries there and part of it is head injuries," he said. "Certainly a helmet would've probably been extremely helpful as far as preventing some of those head injuries."

## Wolf: Shrink taxes, expand business

This is the first of two profiles featuring candidates for the 19th District Oakland County Commission race.

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Cutting taxes is easier said than done, but Oakland County Commissioner Donna Wolf isn't giving up on a plan to cut taxes.

Wolf, 61, is running for his fifth term as commissioner for the 19th District, which includes Farmington

and the southern part of Farmington Hills.

"The county is doing well," said the former Farmington Hills mayor. "I'm looking for a way to reduce the tax level."

Wolf has pushed in the past for a tax reduction. A one-tenth mill reduction, which he has been pushing for, would reduce taxes by \$5 on property valued at \$100,000. But the modest reduction is a start and a way to keep taxes in check, he said.

In addition, the county is also

keeping money over budget in a millage reduction fund with the hope that at some point the county's tax rate can be permanently reduced.

"It would take two-thirds of the commissioners to vote to raise it if it were reduced," he said.

Wolf, who will be opposed by Democrat Kurt Lopez in the Nov. 5 general election, said lower taxes is the surest incentive to business growth and prosperity in the county.

See WOLF, A8



Donn Wolf

### Candidate's night

The Council of Homeowner Associations of Farmington Hills is sponsoring a candidate's night at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 16, at Farmington Hills City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads. Hopefuls in the 37th District state House race, Republican Andy Raczowski and Democrat Stephen Dibert, and those in the 19th District County Commission race, Republican incumbent Donna Wolf and Democratic challenger Kurt Lopez, will square off in the question-and-answer session.

### Beauty and the feast

Residents and businesses alike will be honored for their beautification efforts at the annual Farmington Beautification Commission's

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

annual awards luncheon at noon Thursday, Oct. 17, at the Botsford Inn, Grand River Avenue.

### Veterans take note

A veterans informational seminar will take place 7:30-10 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 17, at VFW Post No. 2269, 23414 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. The seminar will focus on recent changes in the law for possible entitlement to VA benefits.

A representative from the Department of

Michigan Veterans of Foreign Wars Service Office will be present to answer questions.

### Community workshop

Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council of Farmington and Farmington Hills is sponsoring a workshop 6-9 p.m. Monday, Oct. 21, at the Farmington Training Center, 8300 Thomas Street. A light dinner precedes the program at 5:30 p.m. Dr. Richard Thomas, professor of History and Urban Affairs at Michigan State University, will conduct the seminar. Time will be used to discuss the guiding principles developed by the council.

The workshop is limited to 60 participants. Call Stacy Patern at Oakland Community College 471-7632 by Thursday, Oct. 17 to register.