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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Remembering you: Some members from Farmington High classes in the 1940s had a get-together to recall the good ol' days./A3

Follow up: Drugs had a role in the death of a woman, who was found in a Farmington Hills parking lot./A4

OPINION

Our picks: We make our endorsements in both the U.S. House and the Oakland County Sheriff races./A18

COMMUNITY LIFE

Fifty's nifty: So says an author who spoke at Adat Shalom in Farmington Hills about turning the golden age./B1

SPORTS

Swim results: Farmington Hills Mercy and Farmington Harrison finished among the top teams in the Oakland County girls swim meet./C1

Title chase: Farmington Hills Mercy will attempt to win its sixth straight Catholic League girls cross country championship Saturday./C1

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Schools: Put brakes on driver

Farmington school officials want a ruling overturned, which reinstated a bus driver who was fired after witnesses said she drove seven children across railroad tracks in front of an oncoming train.

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

The actions of a Farmington-area school bus driver have the Board of Education and the Transportation Association involved in a court dispute.

In September 1995, the driver drove her bus, with seven children on board, across the Beck Road train crossing in front of an oncoming

train. The warning lights were flashing, and the train was close enough that its conductor and engineer could clearly read the name of the school district and the number on the side of the vehicle, according to Oakland County Circuit Court documents.

The board fired the driver, in accordance with the Transportation Employee Rules of Conduct used by

the district. The driver then filed a grievance through her union, the Michigan Education Association (MEA), challenging the board's decision.

According to the grievance procedure in the district's Labor Contract, there was an arbitration hearing in May 1996. The arbitrator found that the driver "either knew or should have known that she should not cross the tracks," but thought that being fired was too severe a penalty, citing the driver's lack of prior traffic incidents in her 20-some years of service.

The school board was ordered to

reinstated the bus driver.

"The district has decided to go to court and ask a circuit judge to reverse that decision," said Bill Albertson, an attorney representing the Farmington schools.

The matter is scheduled to be heard by Oakland Circuit Court Judge Barry L. Howard on Oct. 30, a date that may change if the union files a motion to enforce the award.

"The law requires courts to give deference to the decision of arbitrators, but there is a point at which the court can overturn it," Albertson

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STAFF PHOTO BY BRADON LEMLEY

All business: Drasko and Sonja Mitrikeski have been busy pursuing their respective degrees as well as running the Farmington Bakery full time.

Bakery rises with hard work

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

"Business is not just profit, it is life itself."

Drasko Mitrikeski's unofficial motto almost explains his superhuman work ethic. Owner of the Farmington Bakery and a graduate student at the University of Michigan,

Drasko is the hardest-working Macedonian in the pastry business. "I start here at four in the morning," he said, looking around the warm back room of the bakery, where everything is coated with a fine layer of flour. "Then I go to school at nine, and deliver bread to many stores in Ann Arbor. From eleven on I go to classes."

"About one o'clock I come back here, and don't leave before six. At least 12 hours a day, I spend here. Homework is from six to nine. Between nine and 10 I practice meditation, and normally, I go to bed around 10."

Drasko, 33, and his wife Sonja, 32, are natives of Macedonia, formerly Yugoslavia until its collapse in the early '90s. They moved to the U.S. in 1989. Once philosophy students, today they run the bakery on Grand River while continuing to study their respective fields: Drasko, Asian languages and cultures, and Sonja, massage therapy.

"I was working at another bakery before this one," explained Drasko. "I passed here often and always wanted to own it. One day, I came in and had something to eat, and the owner started talking to me, and said it was for sale. That's how it happened."

The couple didn't know what a struggle it would be to bring life back to the small bakery.

"In the beginning it was hard, because this business had had five

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Cellular tower gets go-ahead

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

A 100-foot cellular tower in Farmington will be the first sign of a new wireless phone service from AT&T.

Farmington City Council recently voted to let the company's Wireless Services department construct the single-pole tower and a 12-by-20-foot equipment shed on the grounds of the Public Services Department at Nine Mile and Farmington roads.

"It will be located at the facility where our public works takes place," said Kevin Gushman, director of public services. "It takes up a small area, 40 by 60 feet, in the corner of our yard, (which was) formerly used as a storage area."

AT&T and local officials have agreed on a contract outlining the phone company's use of the land for the next 25 years, during which it will pay about \$360,000 in lease money. AT&T will also pay Public Services \$10,000 to put towards an improved callback pager system and provide cellular phone equipment to the city. It will pay extra if additional antennas are put on the tower.

The structure is part of a new wave of technology from AT&T, which plans to introduce a wireless service called Personal Communications Services (PCS) throughout Southeast Michigan and around the country.

"It will offer customers an alternative to cellular (service)," said Rackelle Hoff, AT&T public relations consultant. "It's just another choice, like AM is to FM."

"The main difference is the technology. It transmits at a higher frequency. It also operates at lower power, offers better voice quality, and longer battery service. The user won't notice the technical difference, but they will notice improved quality."

The PCS system for Southeast Michigan is expected to be completed and operating by fall 1997.

Ameritech and AirTouch Cellular (formerly Cellular One) recently approached the city of Farmington Hills about constructing new cellular towers in residential areas instead of commercial or industrial ones. A citizens' committee did a study on the health aspects of towers in residential areas, and submitted a report to the Hills planning committee.

Lopez: Get public involved in county

This is the second profile of two candidates in the 18th District Oakland County Commission race.

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Democrat Kurt Lopez doesn't want the job of county commissioner to be that of "the invisible man."

Lopez, 28, is running against incumbent Republican Donn Wolf, in part, because he believes 18th

District residents aren't aware of what their commissioner does.

"I really found out most of what I know about the commission when I was two years ago," said the University of Michigan-Dearborn graduate.

Although county government, and the commission, are involved with recycling, infrastructure, the courts, the airport and the taxes that support them, many residents do see the effects, he said.

"A lot of people have the impression that the commission merely influences the executive (L. Brooks Patterson)," he said. "They have more power than that."

The Wayne State University law student who plans a career in international relations, said the county's road commission works with cities in coordinating sidewalk, roads and other projects, something that he



Kurt Lopez

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Checkout message

Elementary students will be supplying a message for grocery shoppers to take home during October at two area stores. In conjunction with Farmington Families in Action's "Sober October" campaign, brown paper bags at the Farmer Jack store at Nine Mile and Farmington roads will sport student statements supporting a drug-free community.

At Kroger on Eight Mile Road, Gill third-graders decorated bags with healthy lifestyle messages.

Kidney benefit

The Farmington Area Jaycees are hosting a Kidney Benefit starting 7:30 p.m. tonight at their Haunted Hospital, which is on Orchard Lake Road, between 18 and 14 Mile roads. Fifty-

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percent of the total raised will be given to the Kidney Foundation. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$4 ages 12 and under. The haunted hospital offers admission discounts for those who bring two cans of non-perishable food or a receipt from a recent blood donation to the Red Cross. Call 474-6227 for information.

Ghouls say it musically rules...

Farmington Community Band begins its 31st season 8 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 27, at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi with its 11th annual "Spooktacular" Halloween concert. The program will include spine tingling and haunting music

for the occasion as conductor Paul Barber and the 60-member band get into the spirit of the day.

The concert takes place in Twelve Oaks center court. Admission is free. Call 469-3412 for information.

A call to AARP

Farmington Hills Police Sergeant Dennis Green will discuss winter and safe driving at the Farmington area chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons meeting 1 p.m. Friday, Oct. 18, in the Wexford Room at the W.M. Coatick Activities Center, 11 Mile Road, between Inster and Middlebelt. Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48336; faxed to 477-9722; or e-mailed to packy@mail.online.com.