

# Farmington Observer

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

Watching the dimes: *Farmington Hills received a clean bill of health from its auditor. Officials say it is increasingly important to remain vigilant when it comes to monitoring finances./A5*

By design: *A Farmington Hills resident and Lawrence Tech professor was recognized for his engineering capabilities./A5*

## TASTE

Fit for life: *Sandra Dalka-Prysbay has lost over 140 pounds since 1994. Her motto for losing weight is "slow but sure."/ B1*

"Eating Younger:" *Dietitian Muriel Wagner shares recipes, and offers tips for winning the Battle of the Bulge in her newsletter./ B1*

## ARTISTIC EVENTS

Artistic events: *Check out some of the ongoing exhibits in area art galleries./B3*

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## Year in review



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMKE



Dockets and doctors: *The case involving Farmington Hills mother Itsumi Koga, who pleaded guilty but mentally ill to manslaughter in the drowning death of her infant, was but one high-profile court case in 1996 while Farmington resident Ken Wallace, upper right with wife Marion, rejoices after surviving Legionnaires' disease.*

Andrew's victory: *Andrew Raczowski, left, with supporter Kim Jaske in front, defeated Cathy Webb in the 37th state House Republican primary and swept to victory in the general election.*



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMEYER

## Triumph, tragedy courted in '96

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO  
STAFF WRITER

In Farmington and Farmington Hills, the beginning of 1996 seemed more like a wrap-up of high profile crimes that occurred in late 1995 with offenders facing felony charges in court. While those cases continued through the year, changes in local government could be seen as soon

as February. By the end of the year, Farmington Hills had a new city manager, well-staffed fire and police departments and construction of a new fire station was underway thanks to a voter-approved public safety millage in November 1995. Perhaps the most memorable news in Farmington this year,

See REVIEW, A3

## Stores: Help wanted

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO  
STAFF WRITER

Big Apple Bagel owners were hoping to open the doors to the new Farmington store this weekend after a series of delays, including difficulty finding employees to hire. "What slowed us down the most is that we couldn't get a contractor," said Big Apple Bagel co-owner Tom Henninger. "We started looking in June and nothing happened until November."

While Henninger was thankful for the assistance of Farmington Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in finding a contractor, the most recent stumbling block he and his wife, Catherine Henninger, experienced was hardly expected.

Waiting around their store for applicants for about five hours, the Henningers were stunned to have only four applicants walk through the doors.

The showing was quite contrary to the response they received when they opened their Brighton store in 1995. After posting a "help wanted" sign, local newspaper advertising and waiting three weeks, the Henningers had 15 applicants for the Downtown Center location. The same procedure in Brighton netted nearly 100.

"The first day we only got four people ... then we had a sprinkling

See HELP WANTED, A2

## Opening rings out youthful, busy year

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

For a lot of teenagers in Farmington and Farmington Hills, 1996 was a good year indeed.

And with the opening of a portion of the upstairs of the Farmington Hills Ice Arena on Jan. 6 to middle school students, the city's decentralized youth program will have its third location for after school activities.

"Looking back, it's been a great year," said Todd Lipsa, director of the program that started in March at the William Costick Center.

The YMCA on Farmington became the second site to provide recreational facilities, computers and study areas as well as other social activities for children 11-15 on Dec. 2. A fourth location in the southeastern part of the city is also being looked at for opening in 1997.

The program — paid for during the first three years with a \$387,000 juvenile justice grant and \$200,000 in money earmarked for teen programs from the city's parks and recreation millage — runs 3:30-6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. It provides a place for kids to go after school and gives them an unstructured recreational setting.

Hundreds of children have taken advantage of the program already at the Costick Center. The city has pro-

See YOUTH, A2

## Family finds gift with little wasted effort

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

A Farmington Hills almost had a "waste Christmas" when a surprise gift went out with the trash by mistake.

"We had ordered a doll house that we had put together," said Brenda Meier, of Harwich Drive. "It took two months to get."

The 2- by 2-foot doll house came Monday, two days before Christmas, much to the relief of Brenda and Scott Meier, who were planning to surprise their daughter Michelle, 9, with the gift. Mrs. Meier put the gift in garbage bags in the garage.

Early Tuesday morning, Christmas Eve Day, Brenda Meier was getting ready to take out some last minute trash. "I had a couple more bags of garbage," she said. "Hopefully, I would hit the garbage man before he left."

It was then that she noticed the doll house was missing and all of the garbage, including the gift, had been picked up by the Waste Management truck.

"At that point I sort of panicked," she said. Meier called the sanitation office only to get a recording, and then called her husband at work.

"He confirmed my suspicion," she said. "We had a lot of heavy stuff going out of the house because we are redoing two bathrooms."

Meier then called the City of Farmington Hills non-emergency number and asked for help. Dispatchers got in touch with the waste hauler and located the truck.

Meier drove to the truck and followed it to a dump on VanBorn Road and I-275 where she was able to dig through the trash and locate the doll house.

"We found it," she said, all smashed into lots of pieces.

But there's a happy ending. Turns out a couple of people backed out on orders for similar doll houses at the Doll Hospital in Berkeley, where the Meiers had ordered the original.

"We drove there and found one that would work just fine," she said. "It was expensive, but it worked out."

## SHE'S A LEADER

Farmington Councilwoman Mary Bush has been selected as one of the 24 fellows in the 1997 Michigan Political Leadership Program at Michigan State University. The MPLP class consists of community leaders, political activists and local officials from around the state.

Bush and other MPLP Fellows will discuss state policy issues with political, business, media, university and community leaders. Participants in this bipartisan program learn leadership skills, public policy analysis, governance and political skills.

## WHEELCHAIR-BOUND FOR A DAY

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

Farmington Hills Mercy High School will host a program, "Spend a Day in a Wheelchair," the week of Jan. 13-17. The program is conducted by the Heidi Van Arnhem Foundation, which was started by a Birmingham woman, 29, who was paralyzed from a gunshot wound when she was 16.

Selected students will spend a day in a wheelchair to understand spinal cord injuries and learn how those debilitating injuries can be avoided. Pontiac St. Joseph Hospital has donated

several wheelchairs. When scheduling permits, Van Arnhem will spend time talking to students about what their experiences were like and to answer questions about spinal cord injuries.

## TREE MATTERS

Christmas trees will be composted if placed at the curb on your regular collection day during the week of Thursday, Jan. 2, through Wednesday, Jan. 8. City officials urge residents not to place trees in bags.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335; faxed to 477-9722; or dropped off at the newspaper office.