

# Farmington Observer

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Towering issue:** Farmington Hills zoning board members haven't decided on a cellular phone tower, seeking more detail./A2

## COUNTY

**Come to the fair:** It's not too early to think about plans for your children's summer camp, and there's a fairly easy way to find out what's available./A6

**Judge for yourself:** Recent appointments by the governor to fill vacancies have changed the look of our circuit and probate courts./A8

## COMMUNITY LIFE

**Winning friends:** Farmington teens boost confidence, self-esteem in Dale Carnegie classes./B1

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**Hoop tourney:** Farmington Harrison faced Livonia Franklin in boys basketball Tuesday with a berth in the Western Lakes championship game at stake./C1

## REAL ESTATE

**Open houses:** Some people love them, some hate them. Check out our ideas for successful ones./F1

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## Mowers must use paper, not plastic bags

BY GARY WORONCZAK  
STAFF WRITER

Grass clippings and other yard waste collected at curbside in Farmington Hills can no longer be set out in plastic bags, following action Monday by the city council.

The change brings a slight decrease in the annual fee levied on residents for yard waste collections, but that savings could be offset by the cost of the paper yard waste bags that will be accepted in place of the plastic bags.

A contract change with Waste Management of Michigan, Inc. included the new bag policy and the resultant lower cost to the city, which is passing on the portion of the savings to residents. It was negotiated by the Resource Recovery and Recycling Association of Southwest Oakland County, which represents eight communities including the Hills.

The motivation for the change, however, is not financial but environmental, according to Hills public services director Thomas Bissell, who pitched the plan to council members on Monday.

"The major impetus behind the whole thing is the environmental issue," Bissell said. "If you're trying to compost yard waste and return it, then plastic just doesn't fit."

"We feel it's time to do this," he told the council. "We feel it's important for the long-term environmental concerns."

Previously in the 5-year-old program, residents could set out yard waste as tied bundles of brush, in a rigid container or in a clear plastic bag. The bag shift from plastic to paper is the only change.

"Now, many composting facilities won't even accept plastic bags," Bissell said. "Yard waste in plastic smells worse. The bits of plastic that wind up in the compost don't degrade. And then there's the problem with how to de-bag the waste, how to shred the bag open."

The alternative is the paper bag, not the kind used for groceries but those specifically made for yard waste, available at hardware and other stores.

"Unfortunately, paper bags are more expensive, twice the cost of the less expensive clear plastic bag," Bissell said. He estimated the cost to be 25 to 30 cents

See BAGS, A2

## District adds K'garden daycare



BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Kindergarten . . . it's not just for the half-day anymore. The Farmington Board of Education approved a plan Tuesday allowing parents to pay for the option of enrolling their children in a full-day kindergarten program starting next school year. Trustees voted 6-1 for

the new program — with David York dissenting — at Tuesday's board meeting.

Kids still would have traditional kindergarten in the morning, but an afternoon care session would feature literacy-based activities. Children are only graded on the morning kindergarten session.

One main advantage of the Educare program is children stay in one

place during the day, school officials said. Parents — who will have one less childcare trip to make — will still be able to use the YMCA's Prime Time program, which provides before- and after-school childcare at four schools that will offer Educare.

"One of the things we've learned from research is the care of children and their educational needs are inseparable," said Mary Lou Somerville, principal at Fairview Early Childhood Center and member of the committee that recommended the program. "There's a significant need for comprehensive programs

that have continuity and quality." Tuition for Educare will be \$2,000 a child. Transportation may cost extra.

Alameda and Fairview early childhood centers will serve as sites along with Hillside and William Grace elementary. The latter two schools are contingent on interest in the program.

Officials want at least 18 kids to start. If there's a bigger response, the district would use a lottery.

Kindergarten registration started Monday and closes April 25. School

See KINDERGARTEN, A9

## Ready to roll



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

What goes around: Austin Ardanowski, 7, uses his head to help camp counselors gather up hoops last week at the Farmington Area YMCA during winter break activities.

## Anti-bond group to duel district on priorities

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

A group has formed to oppose the Farmington Public Schools' \$110 million bond request.

Farmington Parents for Educational Priorities — or PEP — has six members, but expects its ranks to swell before the March 25 election.

The district is asking voters to approve \$110 million in bonds for building renovations and new technology. Approval would mean a 2-mill increase in taxes, which means an additional \$165 a year for the owner of a \$165,000 home. A \$165 a year for the owner of every \$1,000 of state equalized value.

Voters will also be asked in a separate question to renew expiring mills.

PEP is not taking a position on the millage renewal, concentrating on the bond.

"This bond issue is very very large and there is an awful lot at stake," said Paul Welday, a PEP organizer and Farmington Hills resident. "Farmington voters need to be educated and, in fact, we're going to encourage them to get out and vote."

PEP quarrels with the \$92 million in building improvements proposed — including provisions for performance stages, a competitive swimming pool and expanding TV10 facilities at North Farmington High. The district's priorities are misplaced, Welday said.

He cited the decline in this year's MEAP scores and said the district should work toward "real solutions" for those problems instead.

The group also questions \$23 million in proposed computer improvements.

"We're concerned we would have a 24-year bond issue to pay for new computer equipment that would be obsolete in two years," Welday said. "It's like mortgaging a new car. It makes no sense."

PEP's main purpose is to offer voters an alternative view about the bond issue and members are available to speak before any organization, Welday said. The group plans to file as an orga-

See BOND, A10

## Green light for Orchard Lake Road signals

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Though there is a debate whether a new computerized traffic light system is speeding up the flow of vehicles on Orchard Lake, a manager at Braeger's Bagels in Orchard Lake and at Farmington Hills bagel outlet likes Fast-Trac for another reason.

"We can tell when we're going to get busy just by the lights," said Becky DeYoung, a manager at Braeger's Bagels on Orchard Lake and 13 Mile.

Fast-Trac is up and running from 11 Mile to Long Lake roads on Orchard Lake as it travels through

Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield. Construction started for the new signal system on Grand River and Farmington.

Fast-Trac uses cameras and computers to monitor traffic flow and reallocate green signal time to match the amount of vehicles traveling on the roadway. Motorists should see immediate improvements, said a spokesman for the Road Commission for Oakland County.

"The heavier flow of traffic should see some more green time," said Brian Whistler, an assistant to the commission director. "You'll proba-

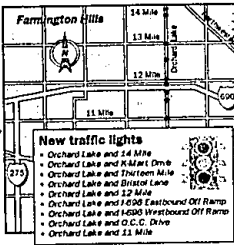
bly see adjustments in green time for left turns.

"Instead of giving 5 or 7 seconds on a green for a left turn, it will give time based on what the demand is."

That should cut down on the severity of accidents, which is ongoing concern at certain intersections. Orchard Lake and 12 Mile and Orchard Lake and 14 Mile are high-incident areas, police said.

They was the first Oakland County city to use Fast-Trac and accidents there dropped by 60 per-

See SIGNALS, A2



## Time to get a GRIP

A powerful message of non-use of alcohol and drugs, presented with music, laughter, honesty and participation, is what Karl Anthony brings to Farmington High School March 8.

Anthony will lead a workshop for students in grades four through eight and their parents at this year's GRIP: The Next Generation program, from 9 a.m. to noon one week from Saturday. After the presentation, students and parents will break out into smaller groups to focus on a variety of topics.

Last year's presentation brought out more than 700 people. It's offered free through the Farmington Families in Action, Farmington Public Schools, Hudson's, a grant from Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, FRW, the Farmington YMCA, the Farmington Exchange Club, Farmington Hills Police Department and

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

the Farmington Public Safety Department. Send for a form only by mail at the Farmington Public Schools, 32500 Shiawassee St., Farmington 48338, or by fax at 489-3314.

## TV series for fire chief?

During his presentation of the Farmington Hills Fire Department's annual report at Monday's city council meeting, fire Chief Rich Marinucci mentioned that it is the department's credit that the metro news media thinks highly of it and as of late has been coming to the Hills when it needs general police or fire information.

This reference and the fact that Marinucci and police Chief Bill Dwyer pop up on the TV news

occasionally inspired council member Nancy Bates to good-naturedly quip, "I've been watching TV lately. Do you and the police chief have the same agent?"

"Well, February is sweeps month," Marinucci volleyed back with a grin.

## New officers for COHA

Gail Haynes is president of the Farmington Hills Council of Homeowner Associations.

Other officers elected at the last general meeting include: first vice president, Andy Nicklebuff; second vice president, Dick Steiger; secretary, Gladys Sanford; treasurer, Joe Columbatto; trustees Marcia VanCrevel and Noreen Yuskowatz; and membership, Irene Kernicky.

COHA meets next at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 11, at the Farmington Hills Library on 12 Mile.