

Farmington Observer

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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Just pennies: The average Farmington area cable television customer will only get 67 cents back, after Time-Warner is ordered by the FCC to make a refund./A3

Signing on: Detroit Red Wing Martin Lapointe will be autographing items at Bob Saks in Farmington Hills to benefit closed-head injury victims./A6

COUNTY

Saying yes! Bernice Gershenon has spent a lifetime of saying yes to the Detroit area through philanthropic activities. Now someone is saying yes to her./A7

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

Golden girl: Hudson saleswoman celebrates 50 years with the retailer./B6

SPORTS



A real all-star: C.J. Ghannam of Farmington Harrison, above, played at Tiger Stadium for a coaches association's annual summer classic Thursday./D1

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Observer offers photo reprints

Had your picture in the paper lately? Or maybe one of your children or other family members? Here's your chance to own a copy of that special photograph. Beginning today, the Observer will be offering reprints of photos that have been published in the paper. Only photos taken by our staff photographers will be available for purchase. It's easy to order reprints by calling our Customer Service department. Here's how the new service will work:

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STAFF PHOTOS BY SEABORN LEMICUX

Nature's way

Ponds, lawns add balance to subdivision life in Springbrook



Family life: At top, Sandy and Marie Brotherton feed the ducks in their pond at the end of a long day in the yard. Above, a mother mallard with her original six, 10-day-old babies.



Editor's note: This is the first in an occasional series of stories about your neighbors — the people who live in the subdivisions and streets that make up the communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Springbrook fits the bill of being the quintessential suburban subdivision in more ways than one: There are sprawling lawns, basketball hoops attached to garages, people walking dogs and riding bikes down winding tree-lined streets.

Yes, there are ducks too. So many, in fact, streets in the Farmington Hills sub could be easily renamed from Westmoreland, O'Neill and Brookview to Huey, Louie and Dewey. "Any time it rains, there's a lot of ducks... a lot of ducks," said Pat Cherry, recalling how his neighbor had to chase the webbed-foot waddlers out of his garage recently. No one is crying fowl, though. Springbrook, aptly named for its brooks and ponds, is a natural habitat for ducks and geese. One couple more than rolls out the welcome mat for their feathered friends.

Sandy and Marie Brotherton have two man-made ponds where ducks, in particular, love to congregate. As the afternoon gives way to dusk, their tall-less cat edges curiously closer to the water only to be dispatched by a series of staccato quacks from a mother duck with her clutch wading nearby. "You tell them momma," shouted Marie to the mother duck, relating to the maternal instincts of raising four children of her own. Their two cats are kept in line. Neither feline — including one who is 16 years old — has brought back so much as a feather in its paws.

The couple spends a great deal of time maintaining the ponds and surrounding lawns as well as feeding the ducks with ample supplies of day-old Hillbilly Brand bought at discount rate. They can also step back and enjoy the moment. "This is God's country," said Marie, who has a riding mower, a hand-held cutter and weed whacker.

Ho laughs about returning to his old neighborhood in Bel-Aire subdivision where lots are typically 60 by 110-foot and seeing professional landscapers handling those chores. "My attitude is if you can't work at it, you can't work at it," said Sandy Brotherton — resident of Springbrook Subdivision.

Take a bow

Former Farmington city Councilman Dick Tupper received a hearty pat on the back from the Farmington Board of Education at its June 17 meeting. The board recognized the long-serving city official for being the recipient of the "Governor's Community Service Award" for exemplary community service by a senior.

Tupper is a volunteer for Farmington Goodfellow, Farmington Neighborhood House and the Exchange Club. Neighborhood House's Phyllis Howard congratulated Tupper on his honor. Tupper had heard members laughing on he recalled how he manage to graduate from Farmington High "before you raised your standards" and cited a quote by a former Farmington schools teacher Lloyd Smith in thanking district officials for their recognition.



Check it out: Kyle Cherry, 5, looks out the window from his family's house in Springbrook subdivision, where many residents enjoy cutting their own spacious front yards.

statue of St. Francis of Assisi — patron saint of animals — standing near the pond. The yard is a labor of love, which is an outgrowth of one they share. Both were widowed when they met after Mass at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. He was previously married 43 years; she for 39 years.

They're going on five years of marriage, part deux. "We said we had so much fun before (being married), let's do it again," Marie said. "It's no fun being alone."

Sandy is a retired state lawnmower and former Farmington city council member. Instead of passing laws, he's busy passing time cutting grass with his landscaper's arsenal, which includes a riding mower, a hand-held cutter and weed whacker.

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FARMINGTON FOCUS

Cop chopper ride
Airplane parts fell sky over Farmington Hills recently, but when a helicopter dropped down in the Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus parking lot Saturday, it was expected. Marion Ringo, grants and publications director for the Detroit Medical Center and a Farmington resident, was the high bidder for the chopper ride in a recent benefit auction. She got an hour-long ride in the official Warren police helicopter May 14. Ringo had had chopper rides before over the Wisconsin Dells and Mount Rushmore. "It's a completely different sensation in flying," she said. Auction proceeds were to benefit cardiothoracic surgery research at Harper Hospital/WSU School of Medicine, the Emergency Medicine Research Program at WSU, and the Racing for Kids program.

Road work detours plenty of business

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Some Farmington-area businesses could be in for a long summer.

Under way since April, Oakland County's widening of Eight Mile Road to five lanes between Farmington and Halsted roads has severely slowed the flow of customers into many nearby stores. With the August completion date months off, many shop owners are wondering how their businesses will survive.

"Our customer volume is about one-third of what it used to be," said Bob Waling, manager of the A.E. Amoco Station at the intersection of Eight Mile and Farmington Road. On Thursday afternoon, construction had rendered only one of the station's four entrances accessible to customers.

"Basically, we're a 24-hour station," said Waling. "My profits have dropped, but expenses are the same. I hope I can maintain enough business to stay open."

For Steinkopf Nursery, located on Farmington Road near the same intersection, the construction is taking away from prime gardening season, April through July.

"Our opening is three months," said Beth Lisikiewicz, a gardener at the nursery. "It's still safe to plant all summer long, but people are thinking 'spring' now."

Steinkopf employees have heard a disheartening rumor that Farmington Road will be fair

See BUSINESS, A2

Lucky baby unhurt by 2-story fall

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A 13-month-old infant was uninjured and doing well Friday after falling from a two-story apartment window in Farmington Hills Thursday night.

The child was with a grandmother in a bedroom when the little girl pushed out a window screen and fell to the ground at Fairmont Park Apartments.

The father rushed outside to get the child, who was crying and still moving. The girl showed no visible signs of injury, but was taken to William Beaumont Hospital, treated and released.

Farmington Hills fire and police were called to the scene.

"I was in the living room and this happened in the bedroom. My wife screamed, 'The baby fell,'" said James Syed, the child's father. "I just ran out and picked her up. She was crying."

"We are very lucky." The grandmother had hold of the child near the window, which was open but had a screen attached, police reports said. When the infant suddenly pushed against the screen, the frame gave way causing the grandmother to lose her grip on the child.

A maintenance person replaced hooks on the window screens Friday morning, Syed said. Plastic tabs were used to hold the screen in place, police reports said.

The couple recently moved to the apartment complex and was unaware of the condition of the screens.

"The screen, it was not fixed properly," Syed said. "The hooks that hold the screen were loose."

Said Farmington Hills police Sgt. Tim Connor: "I would certainly say the child was very fortunate."