

# Farmington Observer

Thursday  
September 11, 1997

VOLUME 110 NUMBER 100

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 92 PAGES • <http://observer-eccentric.com>

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

© 1997 Times-Town Communications Network, Inc.

## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Lunchtime larceny:** A Farmington Hills office worker was eating a sandwich in her car when a robber walked up. /A12

## COUNTY

**Digging in:** Officials helped turn the first shovels of dirt for the county's new medical examiner's building. /A11

## REAL ESTATE

**Taking less:** The federal government offers tax breaks to homeowners who sell their houses. /F1

## SPECIAL SECTION

**Discover Farmington:** Local businesses tell their stories in a special, new advertising supplement.

## INDEX

■ At Home	D
■ Beliefs & Values	B8-10
■ Calendar	C8
■ Classified	G-J
■ Autos for sale	J6
■ Crossword	G9
■ Index	G8
■ Employment	H8
■ Service Guide	J3
■ Rentals	H3
■ Entertainment	E
■ Movie Guide	E6
■ Oakland Digest	A9
■ Oakland Journal	A7
■ Obituaries	A12
■ Police calls	A9
■ Real Estate	F

## Standing tall



Field of sunflowers: Lee Struble, 85, stands amidst towering sunflowers, part of an elaborate garden he tends at Marian Oakland West, a Farmington Hills residence for independent seniors. To learn more about his prize winning vegetable garden, please turn to page B1.

STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

## No group fighting to defeat bond this time



BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Patty Alspach didn't like the first bond issue proposal floated in March by the Farmington Public School District. Now comes the second attempt, a version some \$17 million cheaper and Alspach still doesn't like it.

People who voted no before haven't changed their mind, she said this week.

But with less than a week before voters decide a two-part package totalling \$93.1 million, organized opposition to the sequel has paled in comparison to the \$110 million first try — which failed by just 195 votes.

"There are two different schools of thought," Alspach said. "One is, 'There's not a thing we can do, it's going to pass.' The second is, 'Maybe

See related story Page A5, edit Page A14

they (the district) will go back to the people who said what we really want are academics," Alspach would prefer more traditional settings than modern education is headed.

"A lot of the no votes (in March) were protest votes," Alspach continued. "People are paying for tutors."

One of the more-vocal opponents in March, Paul Wolday, sounded Wednesday as though he's softened his stance. But he wouldn't say how he cast his absentee ballot.

Wolday said the group formed before the last group, Parents for Educational Priorities, "stayed together and we talked at some length about this bond issue. . . Of those who continue to be involved, there's a split."

Please see OPPOSITION, A5

## Older buildings show wear, needs

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

For some, school district bond issues such as Tuesday's \$93.1 million proposal in Farmington spark visions of cushy computer labs. Or of prime rib in the teacher's lounge. Or of just plain excess.

But there are some stark realities, too. A recent trip around the district focused on the shortcomings of the older school buildings.

Mary Green, a language teacher at O.E. Dunckel Middle School whose classroom fronts busy 12 Mile Road, said the noise and fumes of every day traffic sometimes make it

difficult to focus on what she is teaching and for her students to maintain their attention. And then there are the windows.

At Dunckel

"The story I always tell my students is, I had a student who, when after leaning over to pick up a piece of paper, stood straight up and hit his eye on the corner. He needed plastic surgery. I am so deadly afraid of these windows. They are so dangerous," Green said. "They are the kind that are sharply pulled down to open,

Please see TOUR, A3

## Dwyer says Kevorkian should pay for probes

Police Chief Bill Dwyer says Farmington Hills taxpayers are footing the bill for retired pathologist Jack Kevorkian's assisted suicides in the city.

Police investigations into each of a series of four apparent assisted suicides in the city (including three in the last three weeks) cost the city more than \$100,000 in all, he said.

Now, the city is looking to stick Kevorkian and his attorney, Geoffrey Fieger, with the bill.

Cost recovery efforts were suggested by a resident at a recent citizens police advisory board meeting, Dwyer said.

"We've had four of these what they call assisted suicides in Farmington Hills. I think it's very unfair to the taxpayers and I don't think they understand what's going on," Dwyer said.

First of all, he emphasized, police don't have a choice in whether they investigate.

"We're duly bound and responsible for investigating someone found in a motel room," Dwyer said.

When they get such a call about an assisted suicide, the police must send in teams of detectives to initiate a homicide investigation, take fingerprints, contact and interview the family of the victim, and conduct a thorough investigation, he said.

The measures, including paying overtime to evidence technicians and detectives, add to "a giant strain on the police department's resources, which are limited," Dwyer said.

"This goes on and goes on and goes on." Dwyer plans to talk to the city attorney to investigate seeking restitution

Please see DWYER, A8

## Schools warn of MEAP comparisons

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

As usual, Farmington Public School District students' performance in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program fluctuated from building to building.

Generally speaking, Farmington followed state and county trends, with students performing better than 1996 in fifth grade science and writing and eighth grade writing, worse than the previous year in eighth grade science.

But although the district is not satisfied with the 21.1 percent proficient ranking in the latter category — down from 27.8 percent proficient the year before — at least one science teacher emphasized parents should not jump to

conclusions.

For one, the science test administered in March was different, more rigorous, than the one given in 1996, said O.E. Dunckel Middle School physical science teacher Ken Heimerl.

Secondly, "it's a different group of kids every year," Heimerl said. "Yet we continually compare the scores to the previous year. . . With MEAP, the target changes. . . People say, 'Oh, the scores went down.' Either you follow that same group of students all along or give the same test to other stu-

**'This is a more rigorous test. We're still in the first couple years of understanding what this test is about.'**

Carolyn Mahalak  
—assessment coordinator

dents."

And teachers are in a quandary: do they give cursory instruction on many areas, to better prepare for MEAP, or provide more comprehensive, thorough lessons?

The fixation on what percentage of students were proficient also could be misleading in determining how well curriculum is being delivered in the district, said Carolyn Mahalak, the district's assessment coordinator.

At Dunckel, East, Power and Warner middle schools, 89.9 percent of stu-

School-by-school scores, Page A2

dents were either proficient or novice in the eighth grade science test. But what the district has to determine is how close students in the latter category were to correctly answering 53 of 65 questions, or 82 percent, Mahalak said.

"If you're 82 percent on the test you're proficient," she said. "If you're 100 percent you're proficient. If you're 81 percent you're a novice. . . That's the function of the cut score. You're either proficient or you're not."

Dunckel's Heimerl concurred that the district could just be a short distance from making a big jump in the percentages. "I'm sure they (district

Please see MEAP, A2

## Wings score big

The Farmington Hills Police Benevolent Association raised even more money than expected last week, thanks in part to the help of several Detroit Red Wings and owner, Mike Ilitch.

The association, which helps widows and families of deceased police and firefighters in the Farmingtons and Franklin, will net nearly \$100,000 from Friday's golf outing, raffle and auction.

"It was well over expectations," said police Chief Bill Dwyer.

Ilitch — "a very gracious man," according to Dwyer — showed up for the auction, with the Stanley Cup in tow.

Many autographed items were auctioned off, including a limited edition poster signed by the entire Stanley Cup-winning team and donated by Darren McCarty.

As McCarty began auctioning the item, Ilitch told Dwyer to tell McCarty he wanted to up the ante: The top bidder for the poster would get two tickets to travel on the team jet and stay with the team for an away game.

It went for \$10,000. McCarty, whose team won the golf scrambles at

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

15-under par, was joined at the outing by seven other Red Wing players. "They were all great ambassadors," Dwyer noted.

In addition, major sponsors for the event were Compuserve (\$10,000), and Jarvis-Webb, A.R. Associates and the Wine family (all donating \$5,000).

### Start practicing

If you haven't been doing it yet, it's time to start dialing 248 instead of 810 when you're calling Farmington or Farmington Hills from outside the area code. Starting Saturday, all calls to virtually all of Oakland County must use the 248 area code.

### Dig deeply for Tag Days

Groups of young people will hit the streets and businesses on Friday and Saturday to benefit the Music Departments of Farmington, North Farmington and Harrison High schools.

"Tag Days" annually benefits music programs at all three schools.

### Family grows

Everyone has been asking so . . . we are pleased to announce that, yes, Farmington Observer staff photographer Sharon LeMieux gave birth on Aug. 21 to a baby boy, Sean Michael Wilke.

He was 8 pounds, 6 1/2 ounces and 22-inches long, but he's been gaining plenty since then.

While LeMieux and her husband, Steve Wilke, named their child Sean Michael Wilke, their 3-year-old daughter Jackie has other ideas. She insists on calling her new brother "Zebra." LeMieux's mother-son portrait, above right, shows young Sean — and his stripes.



Sharon LeMieux, with Sean Michael