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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Fuelling debate: A proposal to drill for natural gas and oil near a Farmington Hills sub is back on the front burner at the Farmington Hills Council meeting, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 15 at city hall.

TUESDAY

On report: Farmington school board members will hear a study report on Elementary Restructuring as part of the regular board meeting at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 16 at the board office.

Nativity alive: Drive past the Christmas Story from 6-9 p.m. Dec. 16 at Orchard United Methodist Church on Farmington Road.

WEDNESDAY

Neighborly: The Farmington Neighbors Club meets at 11:30 a.m. Dec. 17 at Glen Oaks Country Club to enjoy "A Christmas Program." 474-3750.

INDEX

Arts & Leisure	D1
Business & Finance	C1-4
Campus Pipeline	C5
Classified Index	H3
Autos for sale	F1
Crossword	H4
Employment	K2
Real Estate	H1
Malls & Mainstreets	B4-5
Movie Guide	D4
Police, fire calls	B3
Obituaries	B3
Sports & Recreation	E1
Taste	B1

National honor fuels police pride

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills Police Department's national award has more glass than Mister Magoo's bifocals and a Cinderella slipper factory put together.

The gleam from the hefty, translucent award, though, still pales next to the look in the eyes of the recipients for the National League of Cities honor for best community policing program.

A contingent of Farmington Hills police and city officials accepted the award at the league's annual gathering in Philadelphia Dec. 6. The department was recognized as having the best and widest array of community policing programs for the cities with populations between 25,001-75,000 based on the 1990 U.S. Census.

The department was also honored by the Michigan Municipal League earlier this year. The city council is expected to formally recognize the department at an upcoming meeting in January.

"I think everyone walks around the department with pride; they're like peacocks with their feathers stuck out," said Mark Mostek, Hills police officer.

Farmington Hills police have 39 community-oriented programs, including business and neighborhood watches, bicycle patrol and school liaisons. They involve grade school children to senior adults.

National recognition is only a sidelight: Community policing is credited with the city's 14-percent drop in crime this year and is cited for a 25-percent dip in burglaries through September.

Please see AWARD, A4

Under a spell



Bee-ing on top: Seventh-grader Adriane Bracciale (above) waits her turn before capturing the East Middle School Spelling Bee. At right, runner-up Collin Kravis gets so close, reacting to misspelling "crochety."

STAFF PHOTO BY DEBBA MURFIELD

C-h-a-m-p

Bee speller goes 30 rounds to win

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

You can put a good word in for East Middle School students such as Adriane Bracciale and Collin Kravis anytime you want. Chances are, they'll make sure it's spelled the right way.

Adriane, a seventh-grader, defeated runner-up Collin by correctly spelling *jeune* in what was the 31st and final round of the day. She was put in the position to win by accurately spelling *crochety* in Round 30, after

Collin misspelled it. "I forgot the first 't,'" Collin, a sixth-grader, said somewhat dejectedly.

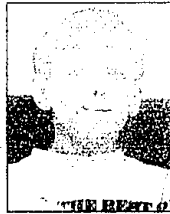
The spelling bee started last week, with 300 students in grades 6-8 and a list of 588 words, including gems such as firmament, dichotomy, palpitation and insomnia. By the time the finals arrived, there were eight students deciding about 100 words, said East counselor Debbie Enson.

By winning the bee, Adriane advances to the regional spelling

competition in March, at the Livonia Manor, said East counselor Debbie Enson.

"My parents helped me with the list," said Adriane afterward. "But mostly I just practiced it in my mind."

Adriane initially felt relaxed about winning the competition. But "Now I'm getting nervous about the regional one."



Please see BEE, A6

Sting on 54 bars, eateries nabs 9



By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police's latest liquor enforcement nabbed nine businesses for selling alcohol to minors, which is up from six last year.

Detectives, using a 17-year-old decoy, checked 54 establishments with Class C, Club, Hotel and Tavern Liquor licenses Dec. 8-10. The nine were ticketed and a violation report filed with the state Liquor Control Commission.

Furnishing alcohol to a minor is a misdemeanor that, upon conviction, carries a \$500 fine and up to 90 days in jail.

The department routinely conducts an enforcement operation this time of year, said Bill Dwyer, Hills police chief. The purpose is to stop the sale of alcohol to minors, which annually contributes to traffic accidents and fatalities during the holidays.

"There is no excuse for laxness on the part of the nine locations," Dwyer said.

A similar holiday sting cited six, or 12 percent, of 50 businesses visited in December 1996.

Tickets issued have declined since the program started in 1986 when 23 of 30 businesses - 76 percent - were cited. In December 1995, all 51 establishments investigated complied and no tickets were issued.

Cited this year were: Zia's, Orchard Lake Road; Steak & Ale, Orchard Lake; Hakata, Northwestern

Please see STING, A4

Staff at North, Harrison nixes longer classes

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

North Farmington High School teachers last week voted against going to block scheduling for 1998-99. But some think it's only a matter of time before it is implemented.

The decision not to follow the lead of Farmington High School teachers, where various curriculum innovations are taking off because of longer classroom blocks, is ranking some. Particularly upset is North parent Karen Fleish, who happens also to teach fifth grade, at Highmeadow Common Campus.

Two weeks ago, the faculty at Harrison High School also decided against block scheduling. The voting was close at both high schools; a two-thirds approval is required.

"Everybody in the know is up in arms about the curriculum delivery (at North)," said Fleish. "They're back in the '60s."

Fleish, who has a daughter attending the 11th grade at North, added that "as a consumer, I am

Please see SCHEDULE, A4

Volunteers surprised by level of town's need

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The sights of the season aren't always connected to a jolly old man in a red suit, strings of colorful lights attached to a tree or candles and tops.

Clustered on the cement floor in a stark warehouse on Eight Mile near Merriman Road in Livonia were cardboard boxes filled with toys and other gifts earmarked for needy families in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

In the middle of the warehouse were

rows and rows of even more boxes, stuffed to the top with canned goods. And boxes of items put together for senior citizens, complete with toiletries, light bulbs and even knitting supplies, awaited pickup at another end of the floor.

Many of the donated items were to have been delivered Saturday by members of Farmington Area Goodfellows and countless volunteers. But a lot of

Please see VOLUNTEERS, A6



Packing up: Benjamin York, 15, a Farmington High student, helps package presents that were delivered by the Goodfellows Saturday.

STAFF PHOTO BY DEBBA MURFIELD

Optimists move for winter

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Breakfast Optimist Club will move its meetings to the winter quarters effective with its first meeting of the new year on Wednesday, Jan. 7.

Beginning that Wednesday, and continuing to the end of March, members, community leaders, guests and speakers will gather every Wednesday morning at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast at the Farmington Training Center located at 33000 Thomas Street in downtown Farmington. Thomas Street is one block north of Grand River, between Warner and School Street, just east of Farmington Road.

Meetings will continue at the Training Center until the end of March when the club will move back

FARMINGTON FOCUS

to its regular home at the On The Tee Restaurant at the San Marino Golf Course in Farmington Hills.

This yearly change has become routine for the club, necessitated by the fact that the golf course closes every year just before Christmas for the winter months.

Visitors and guests are welcome to drop in to any meeting, feel free to drop in. For more information about the Optimist Club, please call Duane Reynolds during business hours at 489-8520.

The master plan

Residents have a chance to help craft master plan for the City of Farmington that is in the works.

The Farmington Planning Commission scheduled a public hearing on the master plan for 8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 12, at the city hall.

Any suggestions deemed worthwhile by the planning commission could be incorporated into the master plan before it is to be approved and forwarded to the city council, said City Manager Frank Lauboff.

"This is the most comprehensive master plan the community will ever have," Lauboff said. "It will be looking into the first 20 years of the next century."