

# Farmington Observer

HomeTown  
COMMUNITY LIFE CONNECTION

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VOLUME 111, NUMBER 26

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 76 PAGES • <http://observercc.com>

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## THE WEEK AHEAD

**Holiday closings:** Farmington Hills City Hall and both Farmington Community Libraries will close Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 24-25 for the holidays. Farmington City Hall is open Dec. 24, but closed Dec. 25-26.

**Trash pickup:** Curbside rubbish collections will be delayed a day starting Dec. 25. If your pickup day is Thursday, put your garbage out Friday; those normally picked up on Friday will be picked up Saturday.

### MONDAY

**On trial:** Prosecutor David Gorcyca will personally take to the courtroom to try a gruesome murder case in Oakland County Circuit Court Dec. 22.

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## Criminal past catches up with teen

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

The criminal past of a 16-year-old accused of beating a Farmington Hills boy caught up with him at his sentencing Thursday. During a hearing in Oakland County Probate Court, Judge Sandra Silver made the Oak Park teen a ward of the state and had him taken in to custody for assault with the intent to do great

bodily harm. An Oakland County Sheriff's deputy led the sobbing teen from the courtroom and his family while the victim's mother stood up and glared at him. The teen will be held at Children's Village until a decision is made as to where he'll be placed, more than likely the Maxcy Training Center. "That is our goal," said Pam Radzinski, the victim's mother. "I want him taken away and maybe (son Jay) can feel safe." The attacker could be held

until he turns 19; his status is reviewed every six months. The ruling was a victory for the Radzinski family, which closely followed the case since Aug. 13 when Jay was punched and then repeatedly kicked in the face after he'd fallen during an unprovoked attack outside the 7-Eleven on Orchard Lake and 13 Mile. Radzinski went public after the teen was tried as a juvenile - instead of as an adult as requested by Farmington Hills police - and was set to receive

probation through a Cobbs plea agreement. That was before court officials and the even teen's attorney were aware of his prior record in California. The defendant's past included convictions for vehicular manslaughter where a 13-year-old girl was killed and possession of a knife on school grounds, a juvenile case worker testified. "This goes on," said Kevin Gross, Oakland County court officer, reading the list to the judge.

Please see TEEN, A4

## Bomb hoax empties North

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
AND RICHARD PEARL  
STAFF WRITERS

North Farmington students were evacuated and had classes canceled after a bomb threat - later determined to be a hoax - was phoned into Farmington Hills police Friday morning. Police officers and school officials searched the building, but there was no bomb.

"Nothing unusual was found and fortunately for us nothing went off," said Martin Bledsoe, Hills assistant chief. The initial bomb threat was called into Farmington Hills police dispatch on a 911 line at 11:32 a.m. Friday. The male caller said a bomb had been placed in the school and was set to go off in an hour. He added he'd phone back in 10 minutes with more details but never did.

The dispatcher tried to keep the caller on the phone longer, but the man quickly hung up. "He was pretty hip to that," Bledsoe said.

Police traced the call to a pay telephone in Orchard Lake Plaza, which is on Orchard Lake, north of 12 Mile. The man was gone when officers arrived a minute-and-a-half after the threat was phoned in. Police searched the area to no avail.

A witness described the man using the phone as a 30- to 35-year-old male, possibly Hispanic or Middle Eastern, wearing blue jeans. An older-model silver Toyota was at the scene during the time of the call, police said.

"We have some thoughts as to who it might be," said Bob Maxfield, Farmington schools superintendent, who came to the school.

He praised the efforts of police as well as students, teachers and administrators in handling the situation, which put everyone from the school - includ-

Please see HOAX, A4

## Purr-fect place to stay



STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

**Feline firm:** Anne Breneman turned her passion for cats into a business. Her Backdoor Friends Cat Shoppe opened in November in Farmington Hills.

## Kitty hotel

Her passion for felines scratches out niche in pet care

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Anne Breneman caters to only the most finicky of guests at her new boarding facility in Farmington Hills. Granted, Morris of Nine Lives fame has yet to check in at Backdoor Friends

Cat Shoppe in Muirwood Plaza on Drake and Grand River.

If the cherubic feline does visit, though, he'll undoubtedly request the Victorian or Presidential suite in

the 18-room lodge. And Breneman, an avowed cat lover, will no doubt cater to his every whisker-licking whim.

Backdoor Friends Cat Shoppe, which opened in November, is designed to pamper felines and soothe owners' anxieties about leaving their cherished companions behind. Breneman can only relate.

"Cat owners tend to be overly passionate about their cats," said Breneman, a Farmington Hills resident. "They wear cat jewelry ... They have some form of cat memorabilia."

"I'm that way. I love cats. They're definitely my passion."

Breneman has four of her own: a Siamese named Alex; oriental short-hair, Rusty; Maine coon, William; and a Persian, Teddy. She is married to Richard Klein.

"He's learned to love cats since he's been married to me," Breneman said. "I had one cat and that expanded to two ..."

Breneman sold gift items at cat fancier shows around the area while working as a data processor at EDS in Southfield.

She liked being surrounded by the animals revered and buried with their masters inside pyramids in

Please see CATS, A2

## Drain solution flows to Hills

BY GREG KOWALSKI  
STAFF WRITER

A multi million dollar project to extend the Edwards Drain south of West Bloomfield and into Farmington Hills may be the solution to the severe flooding that prompted a man to sue the township and the Oakland County Drain Commission.

Jay Siefman of West Bloomfield agreed to drop his suit Thursday in Oakland County Circuit Court at the urging of Judge Fred Mester.

"I have agreed to the request of the judge to try and resolve this matter," Siefman said. He will meet with township and drain commission officials to try and resolve the suit out of court.

George Kuhn, Oakland County drain commissioner, said a solution being considered is to extend the Edwards Relief Drain from where it spills out into a stream just west of Siefman's house on Wallbrook at the southeast corner of the township into Farmington Hills where it would empty into a branch of the Rouge River.

That's what was originally planned when the Edwards Drain was built in the early 1970s. "But people didn't want to give easements," Kuhn said. "So it couldn't end where it should be."

Kuhn estimated the project would cost \$1 to \$2 million but could be paid for or supplemented by federal grant money.

Complicating the matter is that two communities - West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills - would have to agree to the extension.

For now, however, Kuhn said the drain commission will concentrate on settling its differences with Siefman.

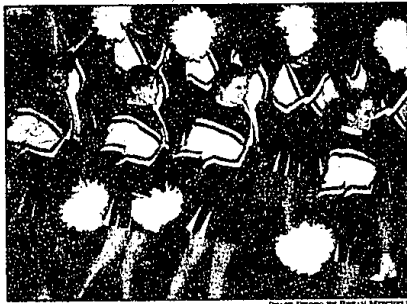
"We are hopefully working toward an amicable settlement," Kuhn said. "We will try to make some concessions and bring this matter to closure."

Siefman has lost more than 20 feet of his back yard which now ends in a 40-foot cliff that falls to a stream behind his property.

Please see DRAIN, A3

## Falcon formation

**Flying:** Members of the Farmington High Pompano team perform at half-time of Thursday's boys' basketball game, which the Falcons won. See Sports for more details.



STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

## Name? None

If nothing is right, then "None" can't be any better.

That's what Farmington chiropractor Dr. Brian Nocella and wife, Jacqueline, are saying after a Christmas snafu by the venerable J.C. Penney Co.

Brian said about three weeks ago, per family tradition, Jacqueline ordered an embroidered Christmas stocking for daughter Brianna, their third child, born in September. The Nocella stockings carry no names - Daddy's has Santa playing golf, Mom's got an angel, son Eric, 4, has a banana, daughter Bailey, 2, a clementine and there would be an orange for little Brianna.

The Penney's clerk said, "We put names on our

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stockings. What would you like?"

"We don't want any name on it," Jacqueline answered. "None is fine."

"Okay," said the clerk.

The stocking arrived - embroidered with that word: None.

"Who's None?" Jacqueline demanded at Penney's.

"What's the deal?"

The unfazed supervisor said he'd order another one. But it won't arrive in time for Christmas.

## Ex-teacher gets 10-15 years for sex charge

BY BILL CASPER  
STAFF WRITER

A 42-year-old Redford Township man, who formerly taught special education students in Farmington, received a prison sentence Thursday for exchanging marijuana for sex with two teen-aged brothers.

Jeffrey A. Downing was sentenced by Wayne Circuit Court Judge Timothy Kenney to serve 10-to-15 years in prison for each count of third-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Both of the victims formerly lived in the north Redford neighborhood where the unmarried Downing lived alone, township police said.

Downing also was sentenced to serve three-to-seven years in prison

for manufacturing or growing marijuana.

The sentence will run concurrently, meaning all three prison terms will be served at the same time.

Downing pleaded no contest to the reduced charges on Nov. 4, the day his trial was scheduled to begin.

He originally was charged with six counts of first-degree CSC, but avoided trial by pleading no contest to the lesser felony offenses as a result of a plea-bargain agreement between his lawyer and the Wayne County prosecuting attorney.

The maximum penalty for a conviction of third-degree CSC is 16 years in prison. Conviction of first-

Please see SEX CHARGE, A2

## Safe and sober

Look for extra patrols on Farmington Road, Grand River, Haggerty, I-696, Middlebelt, nearly all the mile roads and many other thoroughfares during the holiday season, as Farmington Hills police join with the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County and several other agencies to boost enforcement on those and other roads.

"Safe and Sober - Oakland County" is the name of the program, which is funded by a \$55,000 grant from the Office of Highway Safety Planning and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

It aims to cut impaired driving crashes, while increasing safety belt and child restraint use.