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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Look ahead: There's plenty for state and county officials to do in 1998./A8

SPORTS

Back track: Harrison High's football state championship and Sara Kloosterman's Miss Soccer honor are some of the Farmington sports highlights of the past year./C1

COMMUNITY LIFE

Oh, baby: Those cute Beanie Babies are a passion for one collector./C3

AT HOME

Stylish: The bathroom can be as fashionable as any other room in the house./D8

REAL ESTATE

Condo conversion: Nantucket Townhomes in Farmington Hills is becoming a condominium development after just two years as an apartment development./F1

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Investigators seek clues in latest blaze

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills fire investigators continue to search for the cause of a blaze that gutted a home in the northwest part of the city Sunday night.

At 10:30 p.m., firefighters from Stations 4, 5 and 2 were called to 30000 block of Willow Court South in the Willowbrook Commons subdivision, off Farmington and 13 Mile roads, where they found a two-story home with flames shooting through the roof. Firefighters had the blaze under control using hand lines and water from a hydrant.

No one was home at the time. Family members arrived after the fire was extinguished.

Cause was undetermined Monday as investigators continue to examine the home's burned out interior, which included a floor that collapsed. Damage is estimated at \$225,000.

"Right now we're trying to get into the basement to process the area," said Stephen Hume, Farmington Hills fire marshal. "The roof is into the basement."

"If anyone was in the area or had any video (of the fire), we can use any information we can get."

A woman who lives south of the home said an unknown person alerted her and her husband. They waited at the corner as firefighters arrived.

"They told us to leave because the flames were blowing in our direction," Carolyn Lee said. "There were a lot of flames."

It was the second fire in Farmington Hills during the holidays. Three people, including a firefighter, were slightly injured after a blaze on Purdue Street in the city's southeast area Dec. 25.



STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MITCHELL

Trophy time: Harrison football coach John Herrington (center), along with No. 22 Tom Sallee, No. 1 Ricky Bryant and the rest of the team celebrated another state championship in November.

Year marked by perseverance, belief in miracles

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

A major school bond issue and running battles between residents and either new home and commercial developers or a company prospecting for oil highlighted the news in Farmington and Farmington Hills in 1997.

The Farmington Board of Education, saw its revamped, reduced proposal to upgrade school buildings and computer technology sail to victory in a September after a narrow defeat in March.

Various homeowners' associations in Farmington Hills either reached compromises with builders or got their city council to postpone projects with which they couldn't agree.

By the end of the year, the two communities had seen 10 young men

Please see YEAR IN REVIEW, A3



STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MITCHELL

Tiara time: Jennifer Hoemke was crowned the 1997 Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills by Annette Hohl in July.

Tragedy to triumph



STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MITCHELL

Faith and recovery: Susan Garr receives a hug from one of more than 500 well-wishers who attended a tribute concert by the Farmington Chorus for Melissa Garr, who continued to make a remarkable recovery from a severe head injury.



STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MITCHELL



STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MITCHELL

Poll place: After a narrow defeat in March, Farmington Public Schools passed a bond issue in September.



Sheepskin shuffle: In June all three public high schools held commencement at Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor and Justin Lee, of Farmington High, was proud to show off his diploma.

STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN MITCHELL

Vandals ravage yards

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

Police have a good idea who drove a vehicle across some 49 front lawns in the Farmington Square Subdivision in southwest Farmington Hills early Friday morning.

The perpetrators of the day-after Christmas vandalism, which left deep tire ruts in the rain-and-snow-softened ground, may have inadvertently been spotted by a subdivision resident driving through the neighborhood in the predawn hours.

No dollar estimates of the damage were available Monday, but at least one angry resident vowed to prosecute the offenders.

Mike Baker, who lives on Baypoint Drive, whose lawn was hit, noticed almost all the homes have a teen-age resident, leading him and others to speculate that the acts of vandalism were possibly done by acquaintances of the teens.

"It's just like the golf-course thing," he said, referring to the vandalism of the city-owned San Marino Golf Course last summer. "If it had been one or two lawns, you could think they were just being mischievous and forgive it."

"But to intentionally destroy proper-

Please see YARDS, A2

New DDA member strives to mix it up

She says variety is vital for vibrant downtown

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The face of downtown Farmington continues to change, with at least one big-name merchant strongly rumored to be setting up shop in 1998.

But, as fast as you can say Starbucks, this much is certain: New Farmington



Susan Dubin

Downtown Development Authority member Susan Dubin intends on making sure mom-and-pop independents maintain a significant business voice. And why not? She manages the family's own independent business - Dubin Optometric Clinic, the 30-year practice of her husband, Dr. Howard Dubin.

"You can't always save someone else's business," said Dubin this week. "But I'd like to see us stay a mixture of independent merchants as well as those larger corporations that come down."

Dubin, a 1964 Southfield High School graduate who lives in West Bloomfield with her husband, has so far attended one meeting with the DDA. She was recently appointed to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Robert Fitzpatrick, who left the state. Her DDA term will expire in

Please see DUBIN, A2

Give blood

Just another reminder: The Red Cross will have a blood drive 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 2, at Farmington Hills Fire Station No. 5, Orchard Lake, just south of 11 Mile Road. Donations are needed, especially during the holidays when blood supplies run low.

The blood drive is in honor of Melissa Garr, who is recovering from a traumatic head injury. Garr plans to attend the drive. Organizers are hoping to surpass 187 pints collected during a similar drive in September, which helped 501 patients in southeastern Michigan, Red Cross officials said.

Great Harvest Bread Co. will provide cookies to donors while Bean & Bagel will donate food to nurses and other volunteers.

Appointments are encouraged and can be made by calling 248-428-4400 or 248-473-6626.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Holiday dis-cards

It didn't take Betty Borgman of Farmington long to say so long to those good old holiday greeting cards. On Monday, Borgman hauled in a plastic bag filled with the front flaps of cards and deposited the bag into a receptacle at Farmington City Hall. The cards will be sent to St. Jude's Ranch for Children in Boulder City, Nevada, where they will be recycled for the 1998 holidays.

Borgman said she didn't mind dropping off the cards, because "it's a great idea" giving children an opportunity to use artistic abilities and turn this year's discards into next year's treasures. "I know

it's for a good cause," she added.

Similar containers are located in the Farmington Hills City Hall and DPW building and both Farmington and Farmington Hills branches of the public library. Only the front flaps of cards will be accepted. The cards will be collected through Friday, Jan. 23.

Tune in

If you build it ... they will cablecast it. Farmington Board of Education Building and Site Committee meetings will be beamed live into cable subscribers home starting Feb. 10 on Cable TV-10. The pre-meetings start at 6 p.m. before regular board meeting at 7:30 p.m.