

# Farmington Observer

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## THE WEEK AHEAD

### SUNDAY

**Super Singles:** Farmington Single Professionals host a Super Bowl Party at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 25 at Drakeshire Lanes in Farmington. Bring a dish to pass.

### MONDAY

**Get your rest:** Farmington elementary and middle school students begin the two-week MEAP test grind today.

**Camera call:** Learn the inner workings of cable television at a free orientation workshop from 7-9 p.m. Jan. 26 at the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission offices. Call 473-7266.

### TUESDAY

**Diving in:** Swimmers from Harrison High School invade the North Farmington High School pool for a meet at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 27.

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## Law targets same-name business ploy

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Newly proposed state legislation, if approved by Gov. John Engler, would prohibit the kind of "predatory" business practices that Farmington Florist owner Linda Trzcinski knows about first-hand.

If Engler approves the package, proposed last week by 37th District House Rep. Andrew Raczekowski, R-Farmington Hills, and another state lawmaker, Michigan florists and business owners won't have to encounter what Trzcinski did in October.

That's when she found out her longtime floral shop in the Downtown Farmington Center was losing business to a New Jersey company purporting to be "Farmington Florist."

Unknowing customers placed orders with the company, which actually handled transactions through a phone bank. The company apparently has a similar set-up elsewhere in metropolitan Detroit — with listings for the Farmington Hills Florist, Livonia Flowers and Gifts and Northville Florist.

All of those businesses include Bernardville, N.J., next to local exchange phone numbers in the telephone book, but calls to information could get the New Jersey firm. And, when a call is placed, it is answered automatically and then forwarded to New Jersey.

Trzcinski, after failing to get sufficient answers from various state and local agencies, first shared her plight with the Farmington Observer, which ran a front-page article in the Oct. 12, 1997, issue. Two local television stations picked up the story. Raczekowski read the article and saw one of the TV news reports and decided to contact the florist.

Please see LAW, A2

## A new perspective on life



From the other side: Eagle School third-grader Candice Jarjosa tries to complete a puzzle while looking in a mirror during "Changing Places" day.

## 'Changing Places' gives pupils new view of disabled

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Whenever Eagle Elementary School fifth grader Jon Steinberg passes wheelchair-bound fourth-grade student Lydia Renas navigating around a book bag on a classroom floor, he'll kind of know what she's going through.

Jon learned of the daily struggles of the handicapped during "Changing Places," a unique empathy-building program Thursday and Friday.

After participating in the program's "Moving Without Your Feet" station, 11-year-old Jon summed it up.

"When you're in a wheelchair," Jon said, "one thing is, you can't use your feet or hands. And there was stuff on the floor and we had to pick it up and see what it's like every day for the handicapped. Just to get stuff

out of the way takes a lot of effort."

Lydia, 9, who is confined to a wheelchair, said she appreciated the other students seeing things from their point of view.

"They can really experience what I feel and what obstacles I have to overcome," Lydia said. "Like when I drop something and am not able to get it, because I can't bend over like they do."

Lydia is one of the Farmington district school's 33 Physically or Otherwise Health Impaired students. Principal Susan Johnson said about one-half are mainstreamed into regular, general education classrooms.

"Changing Places," which takes place every two years at Eagle, featured five stations set up in the gymnasium. Students who do not have special needs



Confined: Third-graders Toni Singer and Hacey Imhoff try to pick toys and books from the floor while in a wheelchair and with one hand bandaged.

took part in two of those stations, each representing an obstacle that handicapped people must overcome. All classes had the opportunity to participate.

According to Nancy Gorga, who teaches the POHI program and was instrumental in planning the "Changing Places" program, the idea was for youngsters to "get a better understanding of what their POHI peers go through every day ... It increases their awareness and sensitivity."

Second grade teacher Adriana Genrich stressed another goal of "Changing Places" — for youngsters to better understand their handicapped peers, and not to

Please see DISABLED, A2

## Mall's changes worry retailers



BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Don't let the fancy new facade fool you. On the outside, the Downtown Farmington Center mall looks great, thanks to a \$1 million renovation project that is nearing completion. But inside the stores there is concern from some retailers who wonder what's going to happen next.

For starters, there is the dwindling parking — which several merchants tied to the opening of a high-traffic United Postal Service retail store. One long-time business is shuffling to a new location while another is opening a second shop a block away on Grand River, just in case it loses its lease.

Doing the most to stir the pot is the confirmed arrival of national coffeehouse Starbucks.

It soon will take over an empty storefront and adjacent space occupied for 28 years by the Farmington Florist. The independent floral shop, owned by Linda Trzcinski, is moving this weekend to a slightly bigger location in the center, directly across from Farmer Jack.

"Reality is hitting," said Trzcinski Thursday, standing inside her soon-to-be-former shop. But for all that she has been through since rumors began

Please see MALL, A4

## Commission OKs 64-unit development

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

A scaled-down housing development may be a step closer to reality, but nearby homeowners are still searching for some answers.

On Thursday, the Farmington Hills Planning Commission recommended city council members OK a planned unit development for 64-units on 13 Mile Road.

"There's too much missing information," said Fran Vally, Highmeadow Homeowners Association president. "It's not nice and neat."

Two commissioners agreed, reflecting in the 5-2 vote to recommend approval. Commissioner Bob Bruckner is concerned over the 36-feet proposed for the height of the townhouses. Commissioner Glen Fleishacker also voted "no."

Please see OK, A2

## Shaving a minute

### Full-time station cuts Hills' average fire response time

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills fire officials are ready to high five their quicker response times.

A minute has been shaved from the average time it takes to get to emergencies after business hours. According to the department's soon-to-be released annual report the average has dropped from 6 minutes, 17 seconds, to 5 minutes and 10 seconds.

Other items in the year-end summary show:

■ Fire incidents dropped, but damage was more extensive and costly than in 1996.

■ The number of runs increased slightly from the previous year.

■ Fridays between 10 a.m. and noon continue to be the busiest time for firefighters and emergency personnel.

The decrease in response times after hours is significant and primarily due to Station No. 5 opening in July, fire officials said.

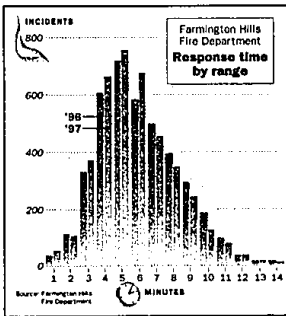
Station No. 5 — built after voters approved a public safety millage — is staffed 24 hours, seven days a week.

Station Nos. 1-4 are staffed during the day.

An additional fire station also correlates with an overall decline in response times from 5 minutes, 7 seconds, before July to 4 minutes, 30 seconds, in August through December.

"What it has done in principle is reduce the (longer) response times ... where what you had were night calls during the week," said Peter Baldwin, Farmington Hills Fire Department deputy chief.

Please see FIRE, A2



TAMMIE GRAY/STAFF ARTIST

### Where there's smoke ...

Farmington Hills Fire Chief Richard Marinucci knows where the hot spots are.

As president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, Marinucci was presiding over a gathering of the group last week in Washington, D.C. when reports of a White House intern's alleged affair with President Bill Clinton hit the news media.

Marinucci confirmed that it's definitely the talk of the town in our nation's capital.

### Tax help — and it's free

Farmington area senior citizens can get free tax preparation help Feb. 3 through April 14 through the American Association of Retired Persons Founda-

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

tion.

Anyone over age 60 with moderate income who lives in Farmington or Farmington Hills is invited to have volunteers prepare their federal and state tax returns on the following schedule:

■ Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Farmington Hills Senior Center, 28600 W. 11 Mile Road on Feb. 3, 10, 17 and 24; March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31; and April 7 and 14.

■ Fridays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Farmington City Library, 23500 Liberty St., on Feb. 6, 13, 20 and 27; March 6, 13, 20 and 27; and April 3.

Special arrangement will be made for shut-ins by calling Farmington Hills at 474-1854.

### Listen to the music

The Farmington Community Band will be the closing performer during the 18th annual Festival of Bands Saturday, Jan. 31, at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi.

Six community bands will perform separately and together starting at 11 a.m. and running until 3 p.m., with master of ceremonies duties handled by Carl Grapentine of WJNB Radio Chicago and the "Voice" of the University of Michigan Band.

Director Paul Barber will lead the Farmington contingent's show at 7:30 p.m.

For more details call 248-489-3412, or check the FCB Web site at <http://www.mystery.com/fcb>.