

Farmington Observer

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 111 years

HomeTown
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK
Putting you in touch
with your world

VOLUME 111 NUMBER 52

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

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Now, he'll budge: A long-time Farmington minister who helped push local multicultural activities is moving to a new job in Missouri. /A3

COMMUNITY LIFE

Taxing questions: Local senior citizens get tax help from trained volunteers. /B1

AT HOME

Paper wonders: Long before computer games and Barbie dolls - indeed, long before Barbie - paper dolls were popular toys. Members of an area club celebrate these works of art. /D8

REAL ESTATE

Giving a hand: Realtors are finding life better when they team with an assistant. /F1

INDEX

At home/D	Obituaries/A12
Autos/J7	Oak Digest/A8
Beliefs/B7-B	Police, fire/A12
Campus news/A10	Rentals/H3
Classified/E-D, H, J	Real Estate/G9
Class. Index/G9	Service Guide/J6
Crossword/H2	Sports/C4
Jobs/H6	Weddings/B4-B
Movies/E8	

Muses meet at Dusty's Studio Cafe

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Dusty Rhodes runs a coffee shop in Farmington Hills. But his is no typical coffee shop.

Certainly, run-of-the-mill coffeehouse trappings are available at The Studio Cafe - an outlet of The Coffee Beanery. Patrons can sip house blends and cappuccinos and munch on muffins and scones, just like they can at Starbucks, Coffee Exchange or Caribou Coffee.

They can play board games and play and/or listen to music. There's plenty of atmosphere: the art of OCC student Zach Olbrot hangs on the walls and computer terminals fill the tables, for games of electronic solitaire.

But Dusty's place has something the others might not have. That's a feeling of being his personal guest. In fact, the only thing missing in an actual welcome mat. Or maybe a map. The Studio Cafe isn't on some busy downtown boulevard. It's hidden away in the basement of Building J at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills.

The music matters

"We sell enough coffee to break even," said Rhodes, a veteran musician who sings and plays an eclectic blend, including everything from his own songs to Irish ditties to Don Fogelberg ballads. "... Now, it's a matter of acquainting people who love music."

And, of acquainting The Studio Cafe to more people like Livonia's Jude and Becky Mansilla, who don't attend the community college but enjoy Dusty, music and coffeehouse camaraderie. More will learn about the basement oasis of hot drinks and cool grooves if they have anything to say about it.

The Mansillas, along with other



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBEUX



At the mike: Above, Dusty Rhodes belts out a harmonica tune at The Studio Cafe, which he runs at OCC. At left, Jude Mansilla of Livonia and his brother, Neil, of Northville perform together in public, a first for them.

friends and family members, were at last Thursday's weekly 7-10 p.m. open microphone session. Even though business was slow on this particular night, laughs and lyrics were plentiful.

Jude Mansilla and his brother, guitar-strumming Neil, dueted on a homemade tune as Becky and some friends listened from a nearby table. Afterward, there were high fives

about their first public performance.

"This was totally just for fun," said Jude, asked about how it felt to sing in front of an audience. "We used to sing at home, just being kids ... Here, while we're singing, it's like we're kids again."

According to Becky, the warm, relaxed, almost familial atmosphere

Please see CAFE, A10

Tab for libraries - \$11.7 million

Farmington and Farmington Hills will vote in August on a 15-year bond to fix one library branch and expand the other.



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Community Library folks say they have 63 percent of residents supporting a bond issue, according to a survey.

They're going to need them and a few more if a ballot proposal is going to be successful after two failed tries.

Voters will have a chance to approve issuing bonds to raise \$11.7 million to expand and renovate the existing Farmington Hills site and refurbish the Farmington branch. If the August primary ballot question passes, taxpayers will see a .6-mill levy for 15 years.

For the owner of a \$160,000 home, that means \$46 more a year in taxes.

Expansion and renovation are needed at both facilities, library officials said. The Farmington Hills library says

Please see LIBRARY, A4

Neighbors want light answers

Football field vote delayed

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Sam Millstone can toss a rock and strike a North Farmington High School football goal post, yet he claims he wasn't informed about a proposal to next year put up lights there.

During Tuesday's Farmington school board meeting, he held up petitions signed by neighbors who didn't know about it either.

"I think there's something seriously flawed here in going forward with this proposal in any way, shape or form."

Please see LIGHTS, A2

FHS veteran Barrett ready to lead school

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

In a Farmington High School career dating back to 1966, John Barrett has held down virtually every possible job. He has one more job to fill and it's a biggie.

The 56-year-old Barrett was named Farmington High School principal during Tuesday night's board of education meeting. He will work closely with current Principal Jim Myers during the next two months before assuming full control of the campus in 1998-99.

Barrett, whose FHS resume includes stints as a teacher, coach, department chair, student activities director and, since 1993, assistant principal, is ready for the move.

"I'm excited," said Barrett, who holds degrees from Eastern Michigan and Oakland universities. "It's a great opportunity. I'm looking forward to the challenge. It's a great place to work."

Barrett and Myers, along with Assistant Principal Catherine Cost, led the way to FHS being named one of Michigan's Blue Ribbon schools for 1997-98.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield said Barrett was the lone serious internal applicant for the job, which opened up when Myers was recently appointed to fill a position created by the pending retirement of longtime district administrator Don Cowan.

"John is an outstanding member of the staff and he's earned his stripes," said Maxfield. "He received a resounding endorsement from the staff."

According to Maxfield, the high school has the luxury of a smooth transition period at the top, while the search begins to find a new assistant principal. The posting for interested district employees goes up March 30.

"Filling Jim Myers shoes is going to be a difficult task, but it seems like John is the perfect person to follow him," Maxfield said. "He has a strong educational back-

Please see BARNETT, A4

Fraud alert

Hills approves creating new consumer protection committee

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Snake oil salesman and carpetbaggers will soon have a new adversary: Farmington Hills is forming a consumer protection committee.

The yet-to-be named nine-member committee would alert the public about harmful products, false advertising and deceptive sales practices.

At its March 16 meeting, the Hills city council formally approved a resolution to form the committee, which Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi has spearheaded. Each council member will submit a name as a recommendation for the committee. Vagnozzi will select the other members.

"At first, we're going to go slowly and do education programs," Vagnozzi said. "Then we're going to see what the capabilities are to take

individual complaints."

The idea for a committee came about after complaints, especially from seniors, who had been ripped off by businesses engaging in deceptive sales practices.

A consumer advocate commends the move. Joe Gagnon, who writes as "The Appliance Doctor" in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, has fought for consumer protection legislation at state level.

"The small claims procedures are very difficult for consumers to go through," Gagnon said. "They're (corporations) smooth in the beginning and they're smooth in court."

"It's nice to have a committee form so business people can give their evaluation of the problem."

Another well-known advocate of

Please see CONSUMERS, A4

West Siders at North



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBEUX

A couple of 'Sharks': Sharon Wertheimer and Daniel Shumer, front, pose with other cast members for North Farmington High's production of "West Side Story," at 7:30 p.m. April 2-4. Tickets are \$7 for students and seniors, \$10 for adults. Call 489-3539 for details.

The orange barrel bump

Farmington Road drivers can expect this week's warmup to bring those orange barrels down off the side of the road and into the roadway.

Construction work at the overpass of M-6 at Farmington Road that began during the warmup in February will continue now that the cold snap has gone, according to City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

Look for lane closures along Farmington Road in the area from Colfax to Grove.

And, as you wait in those long rush-hour lineups of merging traffic, take solace in the warmth of

FARMINGTON FOCUS

spring and the fact that the work should all be over sometime in July or August - sooner than originally projected, thanks to the February work.

Year of the CAT

Reigning Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills Jennifer Hoemke recently visited Meadowbrook Ele-

mentary School in Walled Lake to promote her program: Creativity, Achievement and Teamwork through Theatre Technique (CAT).

She travels to schools with her workshop and tailors it to the age of participants. Her focus is teaching students about the arts through concentration, communication, creativity and teamwork.

At Meadowbrook, she met with 52 sixth-graders and their music instructor.

Hoemke also participated as a celebrity reader in the March is Reading Month program. She read Dr. Seuss books to students from many classrooms in kindergarten through fourth grade.

