

# Downtown branch set for user-friendly improvements

The Farmington branch of the Farmington Community Library system, built in 1976, will be made more user-friendly if the proposed \$11.7 million library millage passes Aug. 4.

Besides the benefits of roof repairs and new heating and air conditioning equipment, which library officials say will replace original units that are becoming almost impossible to fix, patrons will find new individual reading study desks to complement existing tables; new, more energy-efficient windows that also will cut the glare on computer screens; and improved lobby lighting.

Circulation desks in the adult and children's sections will be larger and placed for more efficient access, and the audio-visual, audio book and CD-ROM collections will be located in one area instead of three.

The entire building will be re-carpeted and get new drapery. "The present drapes would disintegrate if cleaned again," joked Librarian Marilyn Smith.

There will be more space for periodicals, due to new, reconfigured shelving; the young-adult section will be relocated and expanded, and there will be more books and other materials available for adults.

The children's library on the lower level will see an improved computer area, and popular reading spots like the old bathtub and the treehouse will be refinished. More efficient usage of the space also is planned.

The Michigan History Room — long a feature of the Farmington branch — will be relocated to a larger site at the Hills branch. The historical society already has given its approval.

The move will create more space for library staff, who will see their crowded facilities renovated both upstairs and down. The main meeting room will get a separate storage area, and a storeroom may become a library tutoring or computer room.

The 16 new, faster computers will provide greater access to the Internet for patrons, who come from both Farmington and Farmington Hills, Smith said.

Library Director Beverly Pappi said both branches will close a few days for re-carpeting, but neither will relocate, as has been the case in neighboring communities such as West Bloomfield.

She said the Farmington branch, which will greatly benefit from the new computer equipment, already beats such libraries as those in Royal Oak, Novi and Northville in terms of circulation.



Check it out: Stephanie Rumao, 7, and Brasad Preire, 6, look through some of the children's books at the Farmington Hills branch of the library Wednesday. Above, the large print section at the Hills branch needs room to expand.

## Libraries from page A1

technical and investment information. The branches, she says, "want to be able to provide information to people where they need it, when they need and how they need it."

Although the major, and most-visible, expenditures will be for renovations to the Hills and Farmington branches — which are at or near the quarter-century mark in age — construction of a 34,000-square-foot Hills addition, there will be less-visible information-providing improvements, such as:

- Upgraded electrical and cable capabilities to accommodate the changing information technology — possibly also hooking into the new fiber-optic lines in Farmington Public Schools.

- Increased dial-in lines for remote access to library catalogs and databases.

- More and newer Internet-accessible computers for both adults and children:

adding 30 at the Hills branch, 15 at Farmington. This will more than double the total available to 76 at both sites.

In fact, the proposed two-story Hills addition will be the information-technology center, housing a computer laboratory, where interested skills can be learned and research conducted, plus the reference, nonfiction and telephone reference sections.

The periodicals — magazines and newspapers — will remain in the main building, as will the fiction, audiovisual and children's sections.

### Substantial addition

The addition is to take up most of the current parking lot, with entrance to both buildings through an interconnecting atrium housing the circulation desk.

The main parking, for 214 vehicles, will be to the west, leaving 147 spaces in the old lot

to the south. The 361 total spaces are 148 more than now exist.

The changes are aimed at providing a more efficient library, as well as one that offers more new books, books on tape, videos, CDs and CD-ROMs.

The aging heating and air-conditioning units at both sites will be replaced, the leaking roofs repaired, new thermalpane windows installed as well as new carpeting, reupholstering the original furnishings and new drapes.

If the millage passes, construction would begin in the spring next year and be finished by early or mid-2000, according to Pappi.

Neither branch will have to be relocated to temporary facilities — as has been the case in such communities as West Bloomfield, she added, although both will shut down a few days when the carpeting is installed.

## Chamber from page A1

The key is keeping them as members, Flaharty said.

"The misconception is, as a chamber, you're only trying to bring in new members. You can bring in 15 new members, but you can also lose 10 who don't feel they're getting their bang for the buck," Flaharty said. "You're not making any net gains."

### Rx for success

Flaharty's prescription for retention is simple: Meet business operators and listen to what they need.

In Canton, she established a member-to-member discount program. Chamber members

could get deals on goods and services from other members.

She also compiled a chamber directory, which was sent to residents: Canton chamber membership grew to 460 from 388 in her two years there.

"The key is recognizing what works in each community," she said. "You can't just take what you've done in a community and implement it somewhere else."

"We need to offer products and services that businesses cannot get anywhere else."

Flaharty is spending her first few months learning the business community. So far, she likes the balance between resi-

dential and business and the peaceful coexistence of both.

"When I worked in the Seattle area, the business and residents were always at odds," said Flaharty, who started with the Southwest King County (Wash.) Chamber. "This is a very positive experience."

She also hasn't detected any turf wars with other agencies involved in business development.

In Farmington, there is the Downtown Development Authority while Farmington Hills has the Economic Development Corporation: Chamber Community Affairs Director Jody Soronen

sits on both boards, which indicates an established partnership, a Hills city official said.

"She (Flaharty) brings her experience from two very good chamber positions," said Teri Arbenowicz, Farmington Hills Economic Development director. "She knows how to represent the business community, and that's very important to the city."

### Working together

Flaharty only sees further cooperation.

"There may be a number of different organizations, which have their own goals, but there are a number of ways we can work on partnerships to benefit the community," she said.

The chamber will work on an employee orientation with Gale Research, which is building a new facility in Farmington Hills. Flaharty plans to invite officials from both cities to provide an overview of services available to 650 newly arrived employees.

Flaharty also has the little matter of the upcoming Founders Festival, which starts July 9. She commends the chamber staff, which has overseen festival planning during the transition.

The English literature major who once aspired to be a high school teacher relishes chamber life, which is similar to the weather in her native Seattle. "I think the beauty of this job is that it changes every minute," she said.

## Circus from page A1

rence.

"It is a very friendly show; patrons get their money's worth," said Vern Mendonca of Redding, Calif., who saw the Kelly Miller Circus June 22. "You come away feeling good."

Around 8:30 a.m., July 18, the show will arrive in 26 vehicles and will set up its 90,000-square-foot extravaganza, which includes a 120-foot-by-130-foot and 37-1/2-foot-high elephant big top imported from Italy. The big top seats 1,500 spectators.

Those who attend will see the High Flying Perez Trapeze Act, a horse show directed by Cindy Herriott Wells and a canine show featuring snow-white Spitzes.

The Kelly Miller operation is run by third-generation circus performer David Rawls, who took control of the outfit in 1963. Rawls' daughter, Sasha, is part of the aerial act, though she is recovering from the delivery of her daughter, Taylor.

With Rawls' father and mother, Harry and Mary, that makes four generations traveling with the circus.

Obert Miller and sons Kelly, Dory and Al started G. Kelly Miller Bros. Circus in 1938 and performed across the U.S. and Canada.

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