

# Farmington Observer

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## THE WEEK AHEAD

### TODAY

**Safety; You're invited to have a good time at the annual Farmington Hills Fire Department Open House at noon to 4 p.m. at fire headquarters on Orchard Lake Road.**

### MONDAY

**Deadline; Eligible residents who wish to vote in the Nov. 2 general election but who are not registered may take care of that task by the end of business hours. Residents may register at any Michigan Secretary of State office or at the Farmington City Clerk or Farmington Hills City Clerk offices, depending where they live.**

**Forum; The Farmington Area Democratic Club hosts a forum for the Farmington Hills City Council candidates and mayoral candidates at 7 p.m. at city hall, 31555 11 Mile.**

**Meeting; The Farmington City Council meets at 8 p.m.**

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## MEAP draws only 20 percent

**Farmington area high school students ranked eighth in Oakland County for their performance on the recent round of MEAP tests. But district officials say the numbers don't mean much if not all students are taking the tests.**



BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

Good MEAP results are one thing, but getting students to take the MEAP is quite another in the Farmington Public Schools.

Only about 20 percent of Farmington 11th graders took the most recent round of Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests, administered last spring. Categories include mathematics, reading, science and writing. Roughly 800 11th graders were eligible to take the test.

A total of 176 took the test for mathematics, 163 for reading, 156 for science and 173 for writing.

Farmington area high school stu-

**See related stories on page A8**

dents ranked eighth in Oakland County for their performance on the recent round of MEAP tests given last spring.

But those numbers don't mean much to the district if not all the students are taking the tests, said Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

"For whatever reason, we have been unable to convince parents that it's in the kids' best interest to take the test," Maxfield said.

In response, the district has set up a testing committee to figure out how to best get students to take the test.

"They're looking at the whole issue," he said. "We really need to have virtually everyone taking it. We would pre-

Please see MEAP, A8

## Council: Feeding rules for the birds

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Council decided last week that a proposed ordinance forbidding the feeding of certain types of birds was for the birds.

Instead, council will revisit the issue at a later date and focus on trying to make it more enforceable than the proposed one passed last year.

Some council members, self-proclaimed bird feeders themselves, said forbidding residents from feeding certain types of birds would be nearly

impossible to enforce.

"Any kind of bird feeder you get is going to attract the birds," said Councilwoman Cheryl Olyverio, a bird feeder. "Unless you limit the number of bird feeders, I don't see how this will have an impact. I don't see how you can regulate the number of times people put seed in feeders."

The proposed ordinance reads: "It shall be unlawful for any person to feed pigeons, doves, gulls and Canada geese

Please see BIRDS, A6

## Sending a message



**Lift off Friday morning St. Fabian School students launched red balloons to kick-off their Fisher October program, which promotes a drug-free life. Attached to each balloon is a postcard asking the finder to write back so that the students can see how far their drug-free message traveled.**

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DUNN

## New chapter begins

BY JONAS M. MOORE  
STAFF WRITER

While library officials and architects complete designs for an expanded Farmington Hills branch, the renovated downtown branch



**Clear guards: New clerestory windows control glare for patrons and staff.**

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DUNN

will reopen Monday, Oct. 4.

"When we realized the appeals process would take longer than we anticipated for the Hills library, we chose to do the Farmington branch this summer," said Beverly Papaj, director of the Farmington Community Library.

Renovations to the Farmington branch and the planned expansion of the Hills branch were made possible by the August 1998 passage of an \$11.7 million bond issue.

The new renovation of the downtown branch is planned to be completed in September.

for unanimously approved plans, including a second entrance onto 13 Mile Road.

"Though concerns arose over the delay, particularly how it would affect financing, Papaj said delays were minimal."

Please see LIBRARY, A4

## Civic groups focus of next public forum

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

The Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council wants the community groups in Farmington and Farmington Hills to be

more reflective of the area's diversity.

The council will take a step toward that goal at 8 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 14, with a community forum on diversity, co-sponsored by the Farmington PTA Council, the Farmington Observer and the Northstar Gazette. The public is invited to the forum, which will be held at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas in downtown Farmington.

**MULTICULTURAL**

The forum is the first in a series of forums kicked off at the council's opening rally Sept. 16. The event will feature a panel of community members with various viewpoints on community involvement. Participants will be encouraged to identify ways to make organizations more responsive to the needs of the community.

Please see COUNCIL, A4

## Motorists get more north-south lanes

BY KEN ARRAMCZYK  
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Wider is better.

Just ask any aggravated I-275 motorist who has dealt with lane reductions due to the \$49 million reconstruction project between I-696 and the M-147-96 interchange.

But those motorists will get relief this weekend as the Michigan Department of Transportation plans to cross northbound traffic back onto the new pavement of the northbound side, either late Saturday or early Sunday, if weather permits. Those motorists have been crossed over to the southbound side since July between the Five Mile and 10 Mile Road interchanges.

"When the crossover traffic is brought back over, it will have four lanes of northbound traffic," said Robin Pannecouk, MDOT spokeswoman. Traffic had been reduced to three lanes on both the northbound and southbound sides.



The southbound side will continue to have three lanes of traffic until the barrier wall is removed, which will take about another week.

"You've got about five miles of barrier wall, so it will take about five or six weeks."

Please see I-275, A8

## Candidates talk issues without discord

BY TIM SMITH  
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During most of Thursday night's Farmington City Council candidates forum, there was very little to distinguish challenger Stephen Dibert from incumbents Bill Hartsock, Johanna McShane and James Mitchell.

Questions were posed and politely answered, without noticeable discord.

But then the subject of urban blight came up, toward the end of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission-hosted forum. SWOCC's Melanie Young moderated the one-hour forum, with questions asked by Joanne Maliszewski of the Farmington Observer and Jim Stark of Northwest Gazette.

Answering a question about whether urban blight could strike his campaign stance, Dibert reiterated his campaign stance. He said blight is creeping into the east end of town from surrounding communities, a stance sharply opposed by the incumbents.

"I see what's happening in Redford," Dibert said. "I see it slowly coming in through the portion of Farmington Hills that is a buffer" between Farmington and Redford.

He mentioned alleged deteriorating conditions in the Botaford Inn parking lot, for example.

Dibert added that the issue is troublesome to citizens he has encountered during door-to-door campaigning. "Residents are concerned."

All of the incumbents disagreed that Farmington is a target for blight, citing a crackdown by the city through various ordinance enforcement efforts.

"The best measure in terms of preserving what we have comes from within," Hartsock said. "This blight issue only comes along when there's neglect. I don't share that view with Mr. Dibert."

McShane said she is "quite satisfied" with city enforcement of various blight and code ordinances. She also noted that properties are taken care of enough so that property values "have risen dramatically."

According to Mitchell, "I live in the east end. I don't see the blight that he's talking about. I see younger families

moving in and fixing up their homes. We're not going to let urban blight impact us."

Keeping the aging housing stock well taken care of, to buttress property values, comes down to local ordinances and enforcement of those, said the incumbents.

But Dibert answered that Farmington must first establish an "identity" as well as a marketing plan to ensure long-term viability.

"We're in a unique position that we weren't in 10 years ago," Dibert said. "We have to compete against Northville, Birmingham, ... the new downtown Novi is building for \$46 million."

Please see FORUM, A4