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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Ballot proposals: Farmington voters won't just have a city council race to decide on Nov. 2. One of the proposals, if approved, would bring council members their first raise since 1970. /A2

COMMUNITY LIFE

Nuptials: A Farmington couple who have known each other for over 50 years tied the knot on Saturday before Mayor Mary Bush. /B1

SPORTS

Gone sailing: Matt Gregory of Farmington Hills is a member of the Hawaii-based Aloha Racing team that is competing in New Zealand for the America's Cup. /C1

Grid contest: Farmington High will play host to Walled Lake Western in a game to decide the Western Lakes Activities Association football championship Friday night. /C1

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Farmer Jack vacancy to be filled



A new food store for the Downtown Farmington Center could not be recruited. Instead, barring a last-minute snag, Damman Hardware next year will move into greatly expanded facilities.

BY TIM SMITH
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A deal is close to being completed that would enable Damman Hardware to relocate to the now-vacant former Farmer Jack in the Downtown Farmington Center.

That means sustained efforts by the city and the center's landlord to find a

suitable replacement grocery store for the empty 20,600 square-foot space were unsuccessful - primarily because it is too small for today's preferred mega-groceries.

Damman Hardware President and CEO Rick Damman Tuesday confirmed that negotiations with center landlord Kimco Realty Corp. are nearly completed.

"We're pretty confident that we've

reached agreement," Damman said. "I still don't have a signed lease in my hands, ... but hopefully this will be wrapped up officially by the end of October."

The lack of size of the closed Farmer Jack "is the primary reason" why Kimco and the city could not recruit a grocery store for the old Farmer Jack, vacated in June 1998, said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

Since then, Lauhoff, other city officials and residents strongly campaigned for a food chain moving in to the space.

On two occasions, negotiations with prospective grocers came close but fell

through, Lauhoff added.

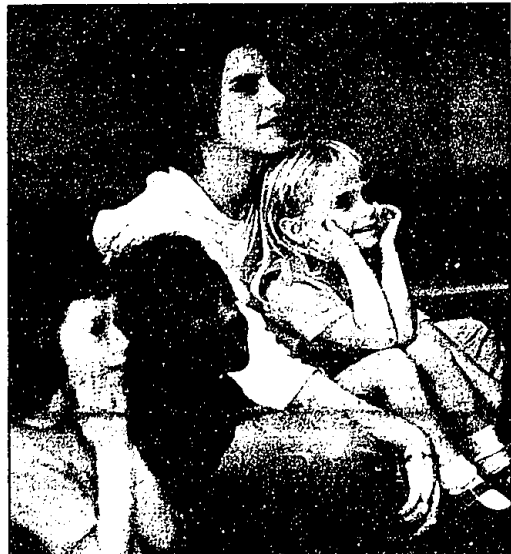
"We all recognize the convenience and importance of a (downtown) grocery store," Lauhoff said. "But we all do understand the reality of a changing retail atmosphere. Downtowns have evolved tremendously in the last 20 years."

Farmer Jack does operate a superstore on Farmington Road at Nine Mile; Farmington's elderly residents do have a "dial-a-ride" type program available to use for transportation, Lauhoff said.

Damman anticipates moving into the

Please see STORE, A2

Story time's a hit



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL SKELLEN

Sights and sounds: At left, Alameda Early Childhood Center music teacher Meghan McKealley and students Laura Ventura, Nadia Weeks and Hayley Slatina listen to the big sounds coming from children's author Peter Roop's conch shell (above) at the end of his presentation.

Children's author turns pages, heads at Alameda

BY HEATHER NEKHAM
STAFF WRITER

As a 26-year teacher, children's author Peter Roop knows all too well how to hold the attention of youngsters.

The former Wisconsin Teacher of the Year and Appleton, Wis., resident showed elementary schoolers how a book begins with an idea and ends up in libraries and bookstores.

He used slides, show-and-tell and question-and-answer sessions in the interactive presentations.

Roop, an award-winning author, spoke as part of the district's

"Authors-In-Autumn" program. He is giving 32 presentations at the district's elementary and early childhood centers this week and next.

"Books start in the head," Roop told an Alameda Early Childhood Center audience made up of kindergartners through second-graders Monday. "We just make things up."

But not all of Roop's characters are made up. Others include Abraham Lincoln, explorers Lewis and Clark, Susan B. Anthony and Martin Luther King Jr.

Roop asked whether the story about Lincoln growing a beard because a lit-

tle girl asked him to was true or not.

The right answer? Yes. A little girl named Grace wrote Lincoln a letter telling him she thought he would look better with a beard. Years later, the bearded president met the girl, picked her up, and said "I grew those whiskers for you. Maybe they helped me become president," Roop said, recalling his book, "Grace's Letter to Lincoln."

Roop also told of a Blackfoot Indian hunting ritual, involving tricking herds of buffalo into running off cliffs to their deaths. The book is called "The Buffalo Jump."

In the book he told the story of the "shon waki," a child who wears a buffalo skin and poses as a baby buffalo in order to steer the herd toward a cliff.

Roop said the ritual was very important to the Blackfoot, because they used every part of the buffalo - the thick hide, the meat, the bones and even the tip of the tail.

"They couldn't go to the grocery stores to get their food," Roop said. A visit to Montana helped him give a realistic edge to the book.

Please see READ, A5

Vagnozzi is considering Lansing bid

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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A rancorous debate over a Michigan House bill has prompted Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi to consider running against state Rep. Andrew Raczkowski.

Vagnozzi and other Farmington Hills City Council members have clashed with Raczkowski over House Bill No. 4777.

The 37th District House lawmaker is co-sponsoring with Robert Gosselin (R-Troy) legislation city officials contend encroaches on home rule.

"I'm looking at it," Vagnozzi said about possibly running against the Republican incumbent in November 2000. "I'd really like to see him represent the two cities.

"If he doesn't, I'll consider it." Vagnozzi has criticized Raczkowski's stance on House Bill 4777 and other issues. Vagnozzi said he'll watch Raczkowski on similar home rule bills, such as dealing with cities' powers to deny exit visas to companies leaving to seek tax abatements

Please see VAGNOZZI, A5

Late starter hopes to finish strong

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Paul Molin, a sheriff deputy who spends his days keeping an eye on prisoners, has experienced his own form of arrested development.

The candidate for Farmington Hills City Council waited until age 50 to marry

Joann, whom he's known since the fifth grade. He subsequently became a father for two adopted, school-aged children, Amanda and Jordan.

Uncle Sam also waited until Molin was 26 and a half to draft him into the U.S. Army.

"Life has a way of evening out, I guess," Molin said.

Molin, 57, wants to be better than even Nov. 2. He is one of five candi-

dates seeking three open four-year terms in the election.

In political circles, Molin is something of a newcomer, although he did run against John Nichols for Oakland County Sheriff two years ago.

Far from a contentious race, Molin ended up befriending the late sheriff, whom he became something of a grandfather figure to the Farmington Hills resident's two children.

Another friend - whom Molin declines to name - piqued the Oakland County Sheriff deputy interest to run for city council. At the time, only three people had filed.

"I said, 'I like politics and I am not embarrassed by saying I don't know,'" Molin said. "Sometimes the 'I don't know' isn't really an 'I don't know.' It's 'I don't apply this properly' at that time.

"At any rate, people get nervous in front of people. They get nervous that they're going to be embarrassed and they end up doing nothing. I'd rather take a chance and see if I can do something."

Where specifics or figures may elude

him, Molin picks up on themes and ideas.

He believes officials need to think beyond the next re-election date. In that vein, he also favors term limits.

He gives Hills city officials good marks on development issues, though the unsettled situation at 14 Mile Orchard Lake and Northwestern Highway bothers him.

On the West Bloomfield side, commercial development has gone ahead. He wonders if there hasn't been some "intentional foot dragging" done on the Farmington Hills side.

"Our side seems to be saying, 'They did this without talking to us. They did this without coordinating this with us,'" Molin said. "So, whatever happens, it's going to be (West Bloomfield's) fault."

Molin would like to see more residents take more of an interest in city business.

One idea would involve regularly sending minutes of meetings and agendas to registered voters, who request them.



Paul Molin

"By saying 'All you have to do is ask' is not enough," Molin said. "You don't make a person feel welcomed by saying

Please see MOLIN, A6

