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THE WEEK AHEAD

In need: The Asphalt Pavers Association of Southeastern Michigan, a nonprofit group based in Farmington Hills, is asking for help in finding 10 families who may be in need of a Thanksgiving meal. The group's approximately 50 members gather to assemble food baskets of a turkey or ham, potatoes, stuffing, vegetables and other canned and boxed foods. Contact the group by calling the business office, (248) 473-8999. Web site, www.apamichigan.com or Cathy Harris, secretary, (248) 473-7139.

MONDAY

Meet: The Farmington Hills City Council will meet at 7:30 p.m. in city hall, 31555 11 Mile.

TUESDAY

Lights: You're invited to join employees and officials to illuminate the night and welcome Santa to town at the sixth annual Holiday "Lights" Ceremony at 6:30 p.m. at Farmington Hills City Hall, 31555 11 Mile.

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Schools use grant money for training

By DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
SPECIAL WRITER

The Farmington School District will pump \$74,000 of county grant money into training students in computer proficiency; better classroom acoustics and a new middle school to help failing students are also on the agenda.

Farmington's gift was part of a \$2.9 million allocation in Oakland Schools' first Equity and Excellence Challenge Grants that targeted special needs students. Some of the money Farmington will receive is earmarked for the implementation of a computer networking skills curriculum. Successful students will pass the Cisco Certified Networking Association exam and have the necessary technical and work behavior skills in demand by Oakland County employers.

Please see SCHOOLS, A6



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DESSLER

Scientific: Above, Rachel Klisman, Samantha Scharg and Quinten Boyd take notes on their observations. Below, Zach Denes studied the effects of different colors of light on the growth rate of plants.

SURFING FOR SCIENCE

Kids use the internet to research projects

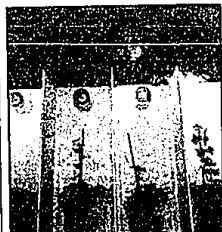
By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
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Usually, there's nothing too scientific about hot dogs and mucus. But, exceptions happen.

Want proof? Forest Elementary School fifth-graders Max Bradley and Sarah Eurstein parlayed both aforementioned subjects into bona fide science projects. Their work, and that of about 50 other classmates, was displayed in the school's gymnasium during the recent Science Fair.

But students' projects were neither silly nor gross. The projects, worked on for about six weeks in the classrooms of teachers Kathy Koperski and Connie Qu'man, revealed a serious side.

With many using the Internet to find subjects, or uncover important information, the students mapped out projects according to scientific method. They wrote hypotheses and procedures, collected data, did



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DESSLER

experiments and came to their conclusions - some which were no where near predictions. When Jonathan Gurka began his project - whether fruits and vegetables generate electricity - he thought sticking electrodes and metal into an apple would power a small digital clock for 10 minutes.

Please see SCIENCE, A6

Time Warner to hike its rates

Time Warner will raise its rates again in January. This time, it will be a 4.6 percent increase that will cover the standard cable package, the tier of channels beyond the basic broadcast group. SWOCC officials say there is nothing they can do about it.

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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Farmington Hills resident Torild Nielsen is not looking for a dish to pass but perhaps one to watch TV.

He heard Time Warner will raise cable rates again in January. The 4.6 percent increase will cover the standard cable package, the tier of channels beyond the basic broadcast group.

Subscribers will pay \$1.42 more a month. That's not what has Nielsen investigating the possibility of a satellite dish, though.

Time Warner is also increasing installation and reconnect charges. Starting Jan. 1, installation goes up from \$25.41 to \$37.76 while reconnects surge from \$18.61 to \$27.66. Hourly service fee for a nonstandard installation call goes from \$29.64 to \$43.91.

"They're just giving it to us right and left," said Nielsen, who attended the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission meeting Nov. 17 when Time Warner officials announced the rate hikes.

'They're just giving it to us right and left.'

Torkild Nielsen
—Subscriber

Nielsen, 66, is like many retirees. He leaves for warmer climates January through March. He also disconnects his cable service when he goes away in October.

The new restart rate of \$27.66 discourages him from disconnecting his \$30.44 a month service.

With a satellite dish, Nielsen figures he'll pay \$20 a month for 40 channels. The drawback is he has to buy a \$120 dish and won't be able to watch Farmington Hills municipal channels.

Nielsen, who regularly attends cable commission meetings, is also an avid city council watcher. But the native of Denmark said, "You don't get charged to be reinstalled."

Since 1990, cable rates have increased more than 40 percent. SWOCC only has authority to monitor basic broadcast rates, which remain at \$10.50. And the Federal Communica-

Please see CABLE, A7

Neighbors oppose size of proposed assisted living center

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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Residents in a Farmington Hills neighborhood are not thrilled with the prospect of an assisted living center in their area.

But it's not for the reasons some might think. For one, a six-bed adult foster home already exists at the site.

Neighbors are worried what the two-building operation being proposed would do to the corner 12 Mile and Middlebelt roads and the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

"We're not against assisted living," said Caroline Abowd, who lives on Middlebelt Road with her husband Peter, "but the placement of that one in that particular area is not the best plan."

Added Frank Murawski: "It's a good thing to do, but the wrong place to do it."

The Abowds, Murawski and other homeowners spoke out against the rezoning request at a Farmington Hills Planning Commission meeting Thursday.

Hills Planning Commission members are not sold on a proposed 40-bed facility, either. In fact, the commission is recommending city council deny the



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DESSLER

rezoning needed for the project on the east side of Middlebelt, north of 12 Mile.

Commissioners voted 7-0 in their recommendation for denial at Thursday's meeting. Hills city council is tentatively set to hear the matter Dec. 21.

An adult foster home for up to eight residents already exists at 28024 Middlebelt. The current use is exempt from the city's zoning ordinance.

The proponent Carl Simeox wants the property rezoned from single family

Please see ZONING, A7

Hills leaders are reassured by U.S. Commerce

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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Farmington Hills City officials are reassured that the U.S. Commerce Department is not working with the city of Detroit to lure away Compuware Corp.

They wouldn't mind hearing the same thing from Detroit officials, mainly Mayor Dennis Archer.

Hills officials met with U.S. Commerce Department Assistant Secretary Phil Singerman Thursday. Singerman met with Archer earlier in the week to reportedly talk about the city's Campus

COMPUWARE

Martius site. The Farmington Hills-based computer software company is considering the site to build its new headquarters.

Media reports speculated the meeting was to discuss possible U.S. Commerce Department financing to bring Compuware to Detroit.

Singerman didn't disclose his conversation with Archer, but told Hills officials

Please see COMMERCE, A5

Drivers' contract bogged down

By TIM SMITH AND
DIANE GALE ANDREASSI

Despite input from a state mediator, contract talks are still bogged down between Farmington Public Schools and the union representing 77 bus drivers.

While a tentative accord was reached with union representatives of the bus drivers recently, in a surprise move, the members voted not to ratify.

The next meeting with the state mediator is planned Dec. 8, according to Sue Zurvalce, Farmington School District assistant superintendent of staff and community relations, who

is on the district's bargaining team.

Zurvalce emphasized that the lack of a new contract does not mean transportation of students to and from schools is, or will be, placed in jeopardy.

"They are working under a contract extension agreement right now," Zurvalce said, adding that the extension is indefinite.

Transportation employees, via the contract extension, are receiving the same salary and benefits allowed under terms of the old pact.

Negotiations are also ongoing for the custodial and maintenance food service contract replacement.

Please see BUS, A6



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DESSLER

Ready to go: Bogged-down contract talks won't hamper bus service for school district students.

