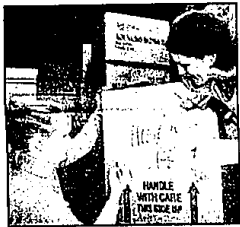


Letters to Santa

All boys and girls, naughty or nice, know Santa Claus will soon be checking his Christmas list - and checking it twice. That means Farmington and Farmington Hills youngsters need to get their letters to the Jolly Old Elf written and headed to the North Pole.

Once again this year, the Farmington Observer is asking youngsters to send us their letter to Santa along with their school photo to appear in the Sunday, Dec. 23, edition. To make sure we have time to forward the letters to the North Pole, get the letters to us no later than Monday, Dec. 17. Send your letters to Santa, care of the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335.

IN THE PAPER TODAY



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRESLER

Sweet Dreamzzz: Farmington Hills residents Julie Hines and Jill Swoish are part of a charity group that will deliver boxes of holiday cheer to kids who really need it. See Home Town Life / C5

INDEX

- Apartments/B4
- At Home/C1
- Automotive/G10
- Classified/E,F,G,H
- Classified
- Index/G1
- Crossword/G3
- Entertainment/B1
- HomeTown Life/C5
- Jobs/G6
- Obituaries/A5
- Opinions/A8-9
- Real Estate/E1
- Service Guide/G9
- Sports/D1

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Mansion lights



All in calm, all is bright: Candles and Christmas lights combined to create a special holiday glow Saturday night, at the annual Governor Warner Mansion Tree Lighting Ceremony, hosted by the Farmington Area Jaycees. Entertainment was provided in the drawing room by the Merry Music Makers of the Silver String Dulcimer Society, and Santa made an appearance that delighted children of all ages. Pictured above, Emily Lichtenberg, 9, of Farmington sings carols with her mom, Susan and brother, Thomas. Right, 3-year-old Luca Schmitz of Farmington Hills learns the fine art of candle lighting. Below, Colleen Budd, 12, of Farmington took a moment to think when Santa asked her what she'd like for Christmas.

STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LENTZKE



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LENTZKE



Brickner announces judicial bid

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER
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Self-described "clean-cut American guy" and Farmington Hills City Councilman Barry Brickner has announced he's running for 47th District judge.

"I've always liked helping people. A lot of people call me the legal ombudsman," Brickner said. "I want to help resolve people's problems as quickly as possible."

Brickner, a general practice lawyer with 25 years' experience, said he brings to the job a broad range of experience, and that's a good background for a district judge



PHOTO BY B. DRESLER
Barry Brickner

Please see BRICKNER, A3

FHS Theater presents



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRESLER

Noises Off! Farmington High School presents its fall play, *Noises Off!* at 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8 at Farmington High School. Pictured above, Lloyd (Drew Martin) nuzzles the comely Brooke (Kate William) as Poppy (Elizabeth Nellums) spies their shenanigans in this romantic comedy. For ticket information, call (248) 489-3412.

Freeway families plan survey

■ Families Near I-275 leader Larry Shoup said his group will survey residents in January about the results of a summer project to reduce freeway noise.

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER
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A Farmington Hills activist concerned with noise on I-275 said he'll head a new survey of residents who live along the freeway, to find whether they feel sufficient work has been done to reduce road noise.

Larry Shoup, who heads Families Near I-275, said surveying will begin in January. He said the group represents 3,500 Hills and Livonia households.

Residents will be asked how they rate this summer's roadwork. "If it did not return us back to pre-reconstruction levels, we're going to ask MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation) to do more," said Shoup, a retired pharmacist who lives on Centerfarm in Meadowbrook Hills.

Shoup was reacting to MDOT's announcement Nov. 29 that a road-grinding project along I-275 this summer reduced surface noise by up to 7.2 decibels in some areas.

Please see NOISE, A2

Farmington approves contracts

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
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Farmington City Council Monday approved tentative, three-year contracts for two labor groups — Department of Public Works employees and public safety dispatchers.

The 12 DPS workers are represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers #1456 and the four dispatchers are represented by the Police Officers Association of Michigan.

"It's the best contract we were able to get out of them," said Chuck Eudy, who represents the DPW staff. "We've got our three-year agreement and pay increases."

In the DPW contract, wages are

Please see CONTRACTS, A3