

## District may drop driver's ed to save costs

BY SUE BUCK  
STAFF WRITER  
sbuck@oe.homecomm.net

The Farmington School District may eliminate driver's education as early as this summer to save money.

Terry Klenczar, director of adult and community education, spoke about the issue at a Jan. 15 study session held at North Farmington High School. Parents are already asking about the program, offered only in the summer, because they want to plan their vacations, Klenczar said.

"The program has been offered for

decades.

"Something like 20-25 percent of eligible kids take it from us," said Farmington Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

Students often opt for private driving schools, which can provide classes at a time which most conveniently fits the student's schedule. Also, students are able to start as soon as they become eligible to take the course, Maxfield said.

The cost is \$160 per student with an average 200 students attending annually. The state provides a stipend of \$96.50 per student, which the district matches. Tuition may be charged, but

can't exceed costs, Klenczar said.

Ten teachers were used last year along with one paraprofessional, one student aide, and one supervisor. "Last year it cost the district about \$22,000 which came out of the general fund," Klenczar said. "This year we anticipate about \$18,000."

If the district discontinues the program, it will still be required by law to administer a voucher or student reimbursement program, which provides partial tuition to each eligible student who completes an approved driver education program.

The money for the stipend is derived from Michigan driver's license fees, with \$4 allocated from each new or renewed license, Klenczar said.

The state is in the process of removing the wording about matching funds from the law, she added.

About half of the school districts in Oakland County provide driver's education. Troy and Novi are offering the program. Walled Lake, Southfield and Birmingham are not.

The \$160 fee is at the high end but private schools charge more than \$200, she said.



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### Happy 50th, Troop 110!

Attention, past Scoutmasters and Eagle Scouts of Boy Scout Troop 110: Be prepared to have a great time as the troop, based out of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Farmington, celebrates its 50th anniversary in February.

A special dinner to honor the event will be held Sunday, Feb. 3.

If you have not yet been contacted, please call Jeff Vallender at (248) 471-3044.

## Best of a good bunch

### Rodriguez chosen Officer of the Year

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER  
ppace@oe.homecomm.net

Dan Rodriguez appears to possess a sixth sense when it comes to fighting crime.

In the past year, he has helped thwart an armed robbery at a 7-Eleven and helped track down a young suspect in apartment complex not more than 12 hours after the attack.

Rodriguez was chosen as the department's Officer of the Year for 2001.

The 28-year-old has police work in his blood considering his grandfather and uncle were officers in Cuba.

"I was surprised," he said of receiving the honor. "There's a lot of guys that work hard here. For them to notice me was an honor. There are so many that do good stuff here."

Rodriguez of Waterford Township said becoming an officer was a childhood dream.

He joined the Marine Corps as a reservist and he credits that experience for making him who he is today.

The officer said he enjoys being involved in different aspects of police work.

That's evident in his busy schedule as a patrol officer, department range officer, a tactical rifle instructor, a field training officer, a mountain bike officer, and a drug education instructor in the department's schools program.

He is currently a criminal justice and sociology student at Oakland University and has a criminal justice associate degree from Oakland Community Col-



Give him a hand: Police Chief Bill Dwyer congratulates Police Officer of the Year Daniel Rodriguez.

Please see OFFICER, A3



Blooming with pride: Jillian and Alison Pieron admire Mom Tara Pieron's bouquet of flowers. Tara Pieron received Farmington Hills' Jane Kroupa Memorial Employee of the Year award at a Costick Center ceremony last Friday evening, January 11. Besides her two daughters, Pieron was joined by her husband Dale, sitting behind her.

### Hills co-workers find something special in Tara Pieron

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER  
ppace@oe.homecomm.net

It's not surprising that Farmington Hills workers found something special in their co-worker Tara Pieron.

Exhibiting an immediately inviting personality, the administrative secretary in the city's public service department was recently chosen as Employee of the Year.

"I was surprised," she said of receiving the honor. "It caught me off guard. I nominated other people and was thinking they would get it."

A nice bonus to the award was the fact her husband Dale, an optician for a major optical company, was voted lab manager of the year the same week.

The Farmington couple enjoyed a nice weekend, and he gave her a new diamond ring to celebrate the honors.

"We had a wonderful time," Tara said.

Please see SPECIAL, A3

## Soccer Soccer site for sale

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER  
ppace@oe.homecomm.net

The Soccer Soccer site is up for sale, but whether soccer fields are in its future remains in question.

The 35-acre site at Drake and 12 Mile roads in Farmington Hills is owned by Little Caesars Enterprises and was at one point supposed to be the company's headquarters. Instead, owners of the pizza empire decided to buy the Fox Theater and offices in downtown Detroit shortly after the Farmington Hills groundbreaking in 1995.

The land was then offered to the city for use, with the city agreeing to provide upkeep, said Alexander Sebastian, spokesman for Hitech Holdings. The Hitech family owns Little Caesars.

The company simply decided to put

the property up for sale, the spokesman said. The land is zoned for office use.

A formal asking price has not been established, "but we're accepting offers at this point," Sebastian said.

He said Christopher Hitech, president of the Hitech Holdings, spoke with City Manager Steve Brock about the company's plans.

Brock said the company gave the city an opportunity to buy the land, but it was too expensive an option.

"We did express that if they do sell it, that they may ask the new owners to at least save some of the soccer fields," Brock said.

Sebastian said that would be fine if the new owners would keep the fields intact, but if not, the city at least has a time frame to make other plans.

## Rainbow Breakfast to honor 70 community volunteers

What's new about this year's Rainbow Recognition Awards Breakfast, held Jan. 24 at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills?

For one thing, the award winners, says Multicultural Multiracial Community Council co-chair Karen Bolen.

"We have approximately 70 award winners, all of whom are new," she said.

Also a first, the seventh annual event will honor a "Leadership Award" winner in addition to the Chair Award, determined by Bolen and co-chair Jim Hill. Music will be provided by the Farmington Folk Ensemble String Quartet and the Mercy High Mercy-aires.

Guest speaker for the event will be Alan Amen.

Sponsored by the MCMR, the annual breakfast is a celebration of this community's commitment to diversity and multiculturalism, Bolen said. Past award winners have included adults and youth from all walks of life who have made significant contributions to multicultural understanding and advocacy.

Tickets for the event are \$12 and will be available at the door. Employees of Farmington Public Schools, the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills will have their tickets distributed at their work sites.

For more information about the breakfast, call 489-3339.

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