

Some parents back shared time

BY SUE BUCK
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While others have objected vociferously in recent weeks, some parents at Our Lady of Sorrows School in Farmington say they are willing to explore the concept of shared time programming with Farmington Public Schools.

The plan would create an annual revenue stream for Farmington Public Schools of about \$175,000-\$250,000. Those who favor the plan to bring art, music and physical education to grades 1-5 and physical education for grades 6-8 say they support the administration. Parents who object cite concerns over separation of church and state.

Some of the opposition expressed at a recent Farmington School Board meeting was quite strident — much to the dismay of church leaders.

"A number of members who have strongly opposed this program made threats against the board and public school teachers who might be assigned to the program, if it is eventually approved," wrote OLS Monsignor Walter Hurley in the March 24 church bulletin. "The Farmington School Board meeting was not our finest hour as a parish."

Hurley also noted a focus group was

being formed to explain as clearly as possible what is being considered.

New and different

A small group of parents, including Julie Koehn, Sue Jokinen, Chris Bruton, Mary Pat O'Malley, Meg Hughes and Armon Kabodian, came forward this week to publicly support the plan.

"With anything that is new and different, there can be a negative reaction because they will be forced to change and people don't like change," Kabodian said. "We have small groups of people who are frazzled by this potential change and they are being very vocal. The whole situation has been blown out of proportion. People haven't gotten the information they need to make a proper decision."

They are still waiting to see specifics about course content in the classes taught by public school teachers.

"We need to get a document out about what we're talking about," said O'Malley, who sits on an administration advisory committee. "The contract is illegals. Most of us have not seen it."

Some of the people who spoke at the previous school board meeting made it seem like the administration was trying to pull the wool over people's eyes, Hughes said. "There's been an open-door policy."

Others use shared time

Jokinen remarked that she and husband, Clyde, were pleased with the shared time program run by the Redford Union Schools at Our Lady of Loretto Parish in Redford Township. "They were very nice teachers," she said. "There was no disharmony. It brought the community closer."

Koehn said she attended St. Mary Church in Gaylor, which had a larger shared time program than what is being discussed for OLS. "I felt we had the best of both worlds," Koehn said. "Our school couldn't give us what we felt we needed to become well-rounded. We were a very tight-knit community."

Program benefits

Parents also see a real benefit in the agreement, because Sorrows hasn't had an official art program for some time.

Kabodian is one of many parents who volunteers his time for ArtSmart one hour a week. The program, headed up by an organized parent volunteer, helps students develop an appreciation



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER

Pro-sharing: Our Lady of Sorrows parents Mary Pat O'Malley (sitting), Sue Jokinen, Julie Koehn (standing, middle), Chris Bruton, Meg Hughes and Armon Kabodian (back row) support proposed shared time programs.

Please see SHARED AS

IN THE PAPER TODAY

SUNDAY HOURS

Office open: The Observer Newspapers Customer Service Department will be open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Sunday, March 31. Subscribers who need help or have questions, may call (734) 591-0500.

ARTS



Cast glass: Michael Pavlik's and Vladimira Klumpar's dramatic work in glass is one of 320 works on display at Habatat Galleries, which are hosting the 30th International Glass Invitational during April. /B1

AT HOME

Green thumbs: It's not quite Mary Mary Quite Contrary, but youngsters in classrooms across the state are learning to become junior master gardeners under the tutelage of master gardeners. /C1

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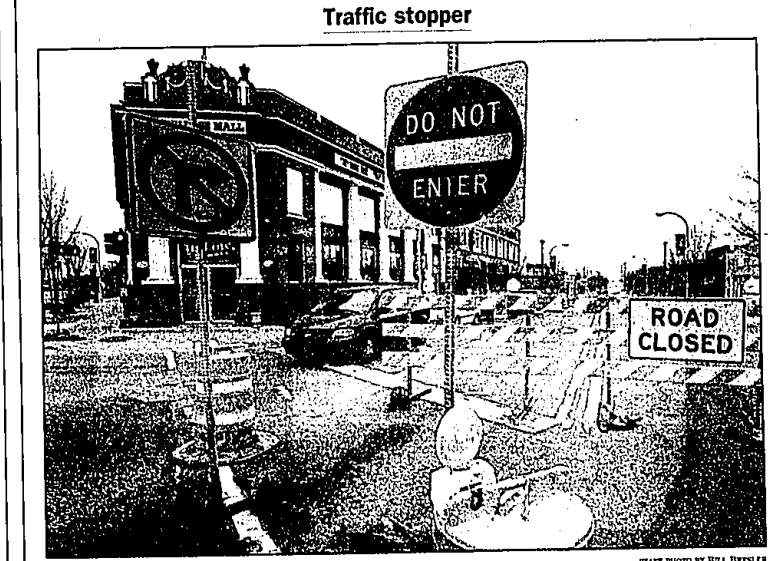
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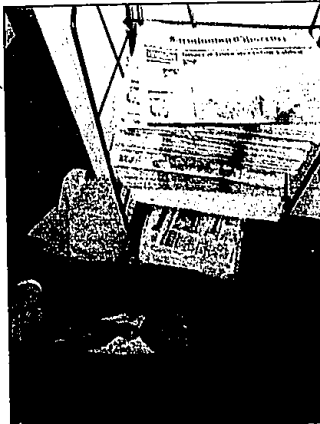
Road closed, stores open: Road construction season blew into downtown Farmington Monday, with the placement of barricades and detour signs. The Road Commission of Oakland County is reconstructing Farmington Road from Nine Mile to Grand River. While northbound lanes will be open, southbound traffic is being detoured via Drake and Nine Mile. Access remains open to businesses along the construction route. Motorists are encouraged to use side street entrances.

Help solve 'Murder at the O&E'

A hint of mystery clouds the face of Nathan Power (aka Scott Freeman), editor of a 1940s version of the Farmington Observer & Eccentric, who will be a key player in "Murder at the O&E," an interactive play hosted April 13 by the Blue Circle.

Everyone who attends will have a role custom-written by Farmington Observer editor Joni Hubred, and each member of the "cast" will have clues to reveal that will culminate in a solution to the mystery. Guests may also choose not to have a role, but to act as townsfolk and watch the goings-on. Tickets include hors d'oeuvres, drinks and dessert, and guests are encouraged to come in '40s vintage clothing, if they wish.

Early ticket buyers will receive their character scripts a week before the event. For ticket information, call 248-477-5450. Anyone who plans to attend should clip this article and photo, as it contains a clue to the mystery.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER

Crime story: Scott Freeman rehearses his part, that of newspaper editor "Nathan Power," in "Murder at the O&E."

Hills, Players to ink theater deal

BY PAUL R. PACE
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Farmington Hills and the Farmington Players group plan to ink a deal that gives the city's cultural arts program first dibs on using the Players' new performance center once it debuts this summer.

The Hills City Council is expected to approve a \$250,000, five-year contract that will allow use of the facility for performances and rehearsals by the city's cultural arts program.

In a detailed agreement, the city and the Players will submit lists of scheduled use for a year and those dates will be put on a master schedule.

The city will have first priority for dates after the Players and before any third party commitments.

The deal also lets the cultural arts department's youth theater program use the facility during the day.

At Monday's city council meeting, where the agreement was discussed, Councilman Jerry Ellis, an attorney, said he wanted some details clarified, such as how many Friday and Saturday night performances the city would be allowed to host.

Dave Boyer, director of special services for the city, said his department is excited about the deal.

"We'll have dedicated space in the building," he said. He added funding for the agreement will come from the

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