



**COMING TO AMERICA**

The immigrant's story is an American legacy. For hundreds of years, immigrants have ventured to our shores in search of opportunity and freedom. Many have settled within our own communities. If you are an American by adoption, we want to hear your story for a special July 4th feature in our HomeTown Life section.

Please contact Renee Skoglund at Observer Newspapers, 3025 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, (734) 953-2128, fax: (734) 591-7279, e-mail: rskoglund@oe.homecomm.net.

We would like to hear from you as soon as possible. Pictures appreciated.

## IN THE PAPER TODAY

### ENTERTAINMENT

**Music makers:** People like Dr. Joseph Lewis, Robert Zimmerman, John Gajec and Benny Moon take turns with the baton when it comes to conducting suburban symphony orchestras. /B1

**One more time:** The Michigan Chorales reunites to perform Sunday, June 23, at Pease Auditorium in Ypsilanti. /B1

### HOMETOWN LIFE

**Lots of locks:** A group of Farmington Hills teens are changing their hair styles to help other children. /C6

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# Nissan approves plan to expand

By PAUL R. PACE  
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Score one for the good old U.S. of A—and Farmington Hills.

Japanese automaker Nissan will invest millions of dollars to expand its engineering operations here, as opposed to extending that arm of the company in Japan.

Company officials at the Nissan Technical Center North America in Farmington Hills said it will embark on a \$38.8 million expansion of its research and engineering facility.

That means more than 260 new jobs will be created at the Technical Center, nearly all of them high-wage, high-skill engineering and technical positions. Additional job growth is possible in the

future.

"As Nissan focuses on long-term, profitable growth, there is a need for expanded and enhanced vehicle engineering capabilities for vehicles sold in North America," said Mitsuhiro Yamashita, president of Farmington Hills operation in a press release. "Carlos Ghosn, our president and CEO, has made it clear that well-engineered, attractive, good-performing vehicles are at the heart of our company."

Part of the incentive to grow in Farmington Hills is the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) approved plans to give the Farmington Hills facility a \$23 million tax incentive to expand its office for up to 350 new jobs.

The Farmington Hills City Council did its part in making the deal a reality

recently by granting the company a 50-percent tax break for six years on a more than 100,000-square-foot expansion to the building.

The MEGA offered a 100-percent employee tax credit over 17 years, which would equate to roughly \$23 million in savings to the company.

The city also had to offer the company a tax incentive in order to qualify for the state deal, said Hills City Manager Steve Brock.

The company did not ask for an abatement of the state school tax of 6 mills.

Nissan will save about \$910,000 in local taxes, but still pay about \$1 million in taxes for the expansion, said Teri Arbenowski, assistant city manager.

According to company officials, dur-

ing the current fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2003, Nissan will introduce 12 all-new vehicles worldwide, with six of them coming to North America.

Those vehicles include the Nissan 350Z sports car, the Maxima flagship sedan and the Murano crossover vehicle, along with the Infiniti G35 Coupe, the M45 mid-size luxury sedan and the FX45 crossover vehicle.

In the next fiscal year, Nissan will bring to the North American market an all-new minivan, a full-size Nissan pickup truck and full-size Nissan and Infiniti sport-utility vehicles.

"This puts a significant and welcome responsibility on NTCNA," Yamashita said. "We are very excited to play such an important part in the return of Nissan to prominence in the U.S. and global automotive industry."

## It's almost summer



Playing it cool: Carol Hyska enjoyed dominos, one of the games available at Cafe on the Porch Tuesday evening.



A fine night: Cafe on the Porch opened its 2002 season Tuesday at the Longacre House on Farmington Road. Guests sampled brownies and cookies, sipped lemonade and rootbeer floats and enjoyed music and conversation on a perfect late spring evening. The Cafe is open from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. every Tuesday evening throughout the summer, rain or shine.

# Long-time softball commish retires

By PAUL R. PACE  
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Roxanne Fitzpatrick's eyes fill with tears when she thinks of baseball.

It's more than just a game or even a pastime for her, she said.

It's watching the smile on a child's face who makes that first great catch or that shy youngster's hit to first base. It's knowing a new baseball diamond that she helped support will serve as a place that offers joy to kids and their parents for generations.

After 20 years with the South Farmington Softball Inc., Fitzpatrick announced earlier this year she would be retiring from her longtime presidency of the association that oversees youth baseball teams in the area.

She said it all started when she went to a meeting involving the team with whom her oldest son was playing, the Mustangs.

She got hooked into being the secretary and soon enough was chosen pres-

ident five years later.

"It's been nothing but joy working with them," she said, quickly pointing out that a lot of good people serve or have served on the leagues.

### Way back when

In the early days, the teams used to drag and line their own baseball fields, but thanks to approval of a parks and recreation millage, more ball diamonds got built in the community and properly maintained.

Fitzpatrick, 50, was there to help push through the creation of Founder's Field.

"That was phenomenal, I just cried when it went in," she said.

"I feel so proud of our organization," she said. "We hear nothing but good praises about the quality of our kids and the ability of our coaches."

Because she's been involved for 20 years, some kids who played in the leagues now have children of their own

Please see **SOFTBALL, A7**



Commish: Roxanne Fitzpatrick recently retired as commissioner of South Farmington Softball, Inc.

# City raises water, sewer rates July 1

By SUE BUCK  
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The City of Farmington will raise water and sewer rates beginning July 1.

That means an average water and sewer customer who uses 20,000 gallons per quarter will see an increase of about \$16, according to Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

The total water and sewer rate combined charge per 1,000 gallons will increase 15 percent to \$5.70.

The Farmington City Council approved increases at its Monday meeting because the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department raised its water rates to all suburban users.

Detroit raised the wholesale water

rate for Farmington from \$8.15 per thousand cubic feet to \$9.29 for an almost 14 percent increase, according to Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

Wholesale sewer rates increased from \$6.65 to \$7.87 — an 18.17 percent increase.

Oakland County increased its sewer disposal cost to Farmington from \$10.17 per thousand cubic feet to \$12.29 for a 21 percent increase.

"The City of Farmington will need to increase its water rate to cover these costs and local operations and maintenance costs for the coming year," Lauhoff said. "The proposed water rate fee is recommended to be increased

Please see **RATES, A7**