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mark bittrman

Our Towns

'Failing' school tests well on MEAP

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Still reeling from an Aug. 5 USA Today article which reported Hillside Elementary was a "failing school" on a federal list released this summer, the Farmington Public School received good news a couple weeks ago.

Hillside scored 92.4 percent on the science section of the 2001-2002 Michigan

Educational Assessment Program, meaning that it exceeded the state average of 73.2 percent in fifth grade science.

"That's awesome," said Kris Gekiere, administrator to Assessment & Evaluation.

School officials maintain their confidence in student achievement at the national Blue Ribbon Exemplary School, despite the USA Today report.

In January, President George Bush

signed an education reform bill requiring states to compile a list of all schools that don't make adequate progress in academics for two years in a row.

Besides Hillside, other Blue Ribbon "failing" schools in the Observer-Eccentric coverage area are: Glenn W. Levey, Southfield; Springfield Plains Elementary School, Clarkston and Philip A. Hart Middle School in Rochester Hills.

Michigan had a total of 1,513 "failing" schools, according to a U.S. Department of Education list.

"At least 19 schools dubbed the nation's finest by the federal government over the past five years are also on this year's state lists of failing school, USA Today has found," noted reporters Karen Thomas and Anthony DeBarros in an article pre-

PLEASE SEE SCHOOL, A7

Charity chuckles

John Ginepolis worked the microphone and the crowd for a free plug, bringing out a few chuckles during the auction at the Farmington Hills Police Benevolent Association Golf Outing last week.

The restaurateur was pushing the attributes of his establishment while auctioning a certificate for the rather ritzy restaurant, noting Tribute is the "second-best restaurant in the city."

Later, Channel T's Guy



McCarthy and Dwyer

Gordon was outlining what the lucky bid winner would experience during a lunch with Guy Gordon/Station tour, when he noted Police Chief Bill Dwyer's proclivity to the speak to the media.

"We may even show you Chief Dwyer's private makeup room," Gordon joked.

The golf outing and auction raised more than \$35,000.

FHS Homecoming

Breaking with tradition and hoping to capitalize on overflowing school spirit, Farmington High School will hold its homecoming parade one day earlier at 5:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 27. The parade was originally scheduled for 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 28.

"A Saturday morning parade seems after the fact," said Jeff Tozolan, a senior and student council president, Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss admitted the rush hour parade will affect traffic.

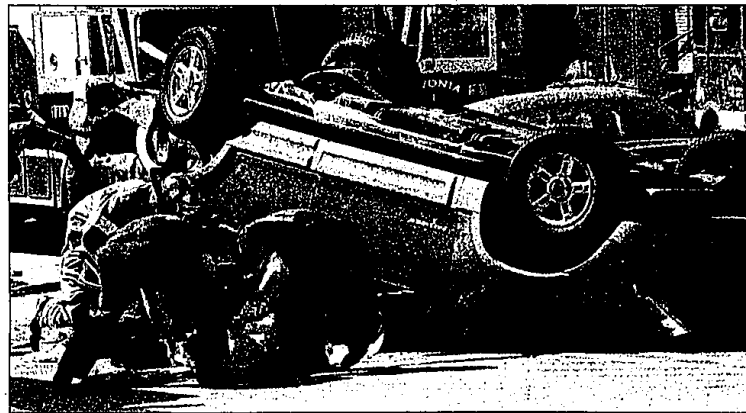
Shiawassee Road will be closed for about 25-30 minutes from Farmington Road to Orchard Lake Road.

Both Goss and Bob Crawford, assistant principal at Farmington High School, acknowledge a parade held a day after the homecoming game is antithetical especially when Farmington High School loses that game as it did last year.

The parade will start at the Farmington Public School bus garage. The band will proceed to the base of the hill backwards. Marching backwards part of the parade route sticks with tradition but Crawford doesn't know how, why or when the practice began. "Because they can," Crawford tried to explain. "It's tradition and it's fun."

The parade then turns left and goes down Shiawassee to the school parking lot where the students will tailgate before the 7 p.m. football game. The dance is at 8 p.m. Sept. 28.

For more information, call Crawford at (248) 489-3455, by staff writer Sue Buck



Hills crash revives debate

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

9-15

The final act of reverence on one's final journey has people asking whether funeral processions are safe on the increasingly congested road of reality.

An incident like the roll-over collision involving a funeral motorcade on Orchard Lake Road north of Eight Mile Sept. 9 only fuels the growing debate.

The cortege was en route to the cemetery from St. Michael Catholic

BILL BRISLER/OBSERVER

Livonia and Farmington Hills crews attend to the injured. The Monday morning accident involved 3 cars. Only this Explorer rolled.

PLEASE SEE CRASH, A3

Learn how to prepare for worst

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Are you and your family prepared to cope with a disaster until Farmington Hills emergency services can arrive?

An upcoming meeting at the Costick Center is aimed toward helping you learn how to help yourself in an emergency.

An Emergency Preparedness Committee spearheaded by Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates will host the first of a series of community meetings at 7 p.m. on Sept. 19 at the Costick Center on 11 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster.

The group, made up of fire, police, court, school, city officials and citizens was formed by Bates in the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001. The idea behind the committee is to review not only the city's emergency preparedness, but to educate citizens and neighborhoods as well, said committee member Cheryl McGuire.

She said an "emergency" could be something as small as a power outage to something major such as a terrorist attack.

"We don't want this to be just hooked on anxiety," she said. "This (meeting) is something that makes

PLEASE SEE PREPARE, A7

MCMR Heritage Fest returns

BY JONI HUBBARD
STAFF WRITER

Last year at this time, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Commission faced an enormous decision.

The MCMR spends a great deal of time, money and effort putting together the annual Heritage Festival. This event,

which spans a week of activities, draws people in the community together to learn more about the diverse cultures represented in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

As important as it has been to celebrate diversity, however, the events of Sept. 11, 2001 left the Heritage Festival committee - along with the rest of the country - in shock.

"We didn't really feel like having a party," said MCMR co-chair Karen Bolsen.

This year, the expanded festival will include new children's activities, new restaurants, a bakery/cafe with desserts, breads and coffees and new entertainment, like Blackthorn and Ed Nuccelli

PLEASE SEE HERITAGE, A6

Historic church celebrates new beginning this month

BY JONI HUBBARD
STAFF WRITER

One of the community's oldest churches will celebrate a new beginning later this month.

First United Methodist Church on Grand River in Farmington will mark the opening of their expanded and remodeled building with a celebration Sept. 27-29. The weekend will kick off Friday at 7 p.m., with a performance by the Farmington Community Band, under the direction of Paul Barber.

Scheduled during Saturday's open house, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., are a cake walk, mini-golf, face painting, displays and a ministry fair, music, tours and a visit from GumDrop the Clown.

A formal dedication service will be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday, with refreshments

and a reception following.

The celebration marks the end of a project that was seven years in the making.

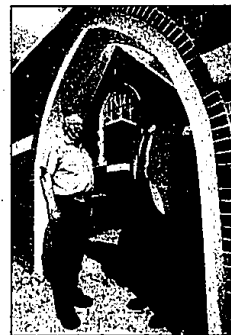
"In 1995, we knew we had a problem as far as the electrical in the building," said long-time church member Dick Carvell.

Rev. Jeff Maxwell said what really kicked off the drive to remodel was an unusual gift.

"We received an anonymous gift of \$50,000," he said. "That kind of got the ball rolling."

An architect looked over the entire building and church members were surveyed to determine what they felt was needed. Among the major considerations were handicapped accessibility, a floor plan that tied the worship and education wings together and a centrally located off-

PLEASE SEE CHURCH, A6



BILL BRISLER/OBSERVER

Dick Carvell and Rev. Jeff Maxwell are looking forward to a weekend celebration of First United Methodist Church's addition.

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LOOKING AHEAD
Outback
Bruce Reilly depends on transportation to get to his job, but is losing a company-provided ride. See Thursday's Observer.

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