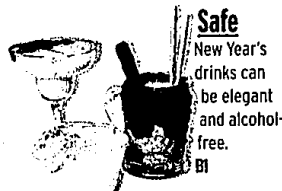


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Farmington council faces busy year

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER

In the city of Farmington, one issue looms large for 2003: hiring a city manager.

Mayor Jim Mitchell said this week that officials are waiting to hear whether a job offer to Isabella County accounting controller Vincent Pastue will be accepted. Pastue first wants to meet with city department heads and may have a notice requirement of up to six weeks at his current job.

"Soon after the new year, we'll have more information," Mitchell said.

In the meantime, officials voted Thursday in favor of asking former Farmington Hills city manager Bill Costick, now a planning consultant, to fill in. Mitchell said Friday he hadn't been able to contact either Costick or the consulting firm Orchard Hills. Because Orchard Hills is also a city consultant, conflict of interest issues would have to be ironed out.

Michigan Municipal League consultant Frank Gerstenecker, who directed the city manager interviews, contacted Costick and several other candidates who indicated an interest in filling the temporary post.

"We decided to allow our department heads to do their jobs, which they do exceedingly well," Mitchell said, "and engage Orchard Hills and Bill Costick on a part-time basis."

"Council liked the idea of his familiarity with the community," he added, noting

Costick would have to be sworn in as city manager and the contract would have to be written so that he would be acting legally as city manager.

"In a short period of time, I don't think there's going to be as much at issue," Mitchell said.

The contract would also have to be approved by the council; provided Mitchell is able to speak with Costick beforehand, the issue has been tentatively placed on their Jan. 6 agenda.

PLEASE SEE BUSY, A8

Our Towns



Centenarian

Herta Orbach, a resident of the Farmington Hills Court Yard Manor, will be 100 years old on Dec. 27.

She is the mother of Harold Orbach of West Bloomfield and Gerald Orbach of Southfield. Harold's wife, Evelyn, said Herta is an excellent bridge player and up until a few years ago, played a sharp game.

Herta escaped from Germany in 1940 and eventually ended up in New York. She was married to Eugene Orbach for 76 years before his death.

"She has many friends and is a very gregarious woman," Evelyn said.

Main Street 101

Farmington area residents who attended the Main Street program "Needs Assessment" on Nov. 18 and 19 have been invited to an intensive workshop for the downtown revitalization program.

Farmington was awarded the Oakland County Main Street grant earlier this year. It provides for three years of technical assistance in downtown development.

Downtown Development Authority Director Brent Morgan described the two-day workshop, held in Pontiac, as an "in-depth overview and interactive discussion" of each area in the four-point Main Street approach: organization, design, promotion and restructuring. Four volunteer committees will be formed in each of those areas.

For more information, call Morgan at (248) 437-1276.

One good turn

Every year, a group of women gather for dinner and to collect clothing to be donated to St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills.

This year, they got a little something special - a gourmet entree, courtesy of a professional chef. Organizer Nancy Quinn said she spoke with Chef Israel Garza of Rose's Italian Chophouse on Farmington Road in Livonia about the annual dinner, and he volunteered to make them a chicken piccata entree.

Quinn said 14 women sat around her dining room table this year; all work in the same building, which houses 360 Services and Quinn Insurance.



Christmas Day fire

A Farmington Hills family started Christmas Day escaping injury when their house caught fire. The Hills Fire Department responded around 2 a.m. Wednesday to the 3900 block of Plumbrook. The cause of the fire, which started in the garage and also damaged two vehicles, is being investigated.

Overdose prompts community to rally

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER

The drug overdose death of Farmington High student Jason Starling has prompted a renewed call to action from community activists.

"A lot of us are involved in this passionately because we've experienced personal issues," said Farmington/Farmington Hills Call to Action Coalition Executive Director Estralee Michaelson. "That's where we got the passion to lessen the pain for others."

She said coalition members are high-action, high-energy people who focus on what they can do to reach out to kids and families with information and resources about chemical addiction.

PLEASE SEE RALLY, A10



BILL BRISLER / OBSERVER
Martha Vetowich waves her hands against the light to show that she can still see light and shadow.

Legally blind: Hills couple seeks justice

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER

Morning is the hardest time of day for Martha Vetowich.

"You open your eyes, and it's not there," said the 69-year-old Farmington Hills resident, who became blind two years ago after contracting an illness her family believes was misdiagnosed.

They'd like to sue her doctor, a former Farmington Hills general practitioner who now works for Providence

Hospital. But several attorneys have told them there's nothing to collect, and Michigan state law allowed the doctor to carry a malpractice insurance that ends its liability when the policy is canceled.

As the two-year statute of limitations closes their options, the Vetowichs have sunk deeper and deeper into debt to cover medical expenses and prescriptions. Even if they could find an attorney to handle their claim, there wouldn't be any cash to collect.

PLEASE SEE BLIND, A9

O&E looking for top area teachers

Beginning in January, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers will honor two teachers monthly from throughout our circulation area for their excellence in the classroom. We are looking for teachers to help in identifying these teachers.

Nominations can be e-mailed to cyoung@oe.homecomm.net, faxed to (734) 953-2232 or mailed to Cathy Young at the Observer & Eccentric



Newspapers, 3625 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Nominations must be received by 5 p.m. of the third Monday of each month.

Deadlines for 2003 are: Jan. 20, Feb. 17, March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16, Sept. 15, Oct. 20, Nov. 17 and Dec. 15.

Two teachers will be honored January through June and September through December. The teachers will be photographed in their classroom and receive four tickets to any Star Theater and a dozen roses courtesy of Wesley Berry

PLEASE SEE TEACHERS, A10

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INDEX

D4 Movies
E5 Obituaries
E7 New Homes
D2 Service Guide
D3 Sports
E2 Travel

B4
A7
E1
E4
C1
B6

LOOKING AHEAD

Color your world
Coming in this week's At Home section: Experts predict the "hot" colors for home decor for the new year.



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