

Phoenix will rise from West River theater complex

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills will have a new movie complex in town as the defunct United Artists complex in the shopping plaza at Grand River and Middlebelt will reopen as Phoenix Theaters next month.

Besides a major renovation, Phoenix officials plan to bring a family-oriented attitude back to the theater business.

Former United Artists Theaters employees Cory Jacobson and Charlie Murray decided to launch out on their own two years ago and put together Phoenix Theaters. Their first project involved remodeling Detroit's Bel-Air Centre complex on Eight Mile.

That gamble paid off. Besides being the only first-run movie complex in the city of Detroit, it ranked 10th in box office revenues in Michigan.

On Thursday, Jacobson and Murray showed their plans to perform the same magic in Farmington Hills.

Phoenix is installing new food vending stations and will also allow people to fill their own drinks and popcorn. Refills will be free of charge.

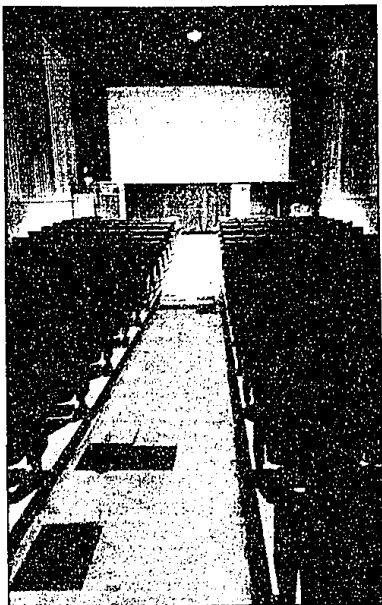
"We did this at the Bel-Air Centre and it was really popular," said Jacobson.

Other food items will also be available, such as pizza and hot-dogs.

Phoenix will celebrate its second anniversary on May 14 with a "film-cutting" ceremony at the nine-screen Phoenix Theaters at West River Centre, near the Kohl's department store. The owners of the building, Tom and Fred Goldberg, saw the success Phoenix had in rehabilitating the Detroit theaters and decided to let the team try their hand at the Farmington Hills facility.

Workers are upgrading the complex with new digital sound equipment and better speakers. New carpeting as well as reupholstered theater chairs are among the interior improvements. A new digital projection system will also be installed in one of the theaters.

The complex seats 2,200 patrons. Remodeling a closed theater in Detroit was a huge risk, but Murray and Jacobson believed it had potential. Their passion paid off; the



PHOTOS BY BELL BRESELER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The theaters needed cosmetic upgrades, including carpeting and curtains.



Workers examine the condition of the windows at the front of the theater.

facility was the premiere theater for the popular Eminem movie "Eight Mile." It also exceeded its first-year goal of 400,000 patrons.

"We thought if we gave people a more personal approach, it would be better," said Jacobson. Holding community

events and supporting local groups will be part of the plan at the new theaters, Jacobson said. The Phoenix Theaters at West River Centre plan to open on May 15 or 16, depending on movie release dates.

ppace@oe.comnet | (248) 477-5450

Schools of Choice deadline set

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Public Schools will accept Schools of Choice applications from families in other districts in Oakland County or the Oakland County Intermediate School District, which includes Clarenceville School District, beginning Friday, May 7 through Wednesday, May 14.

Officials voted recently to open a limited number of slots at the elementary level to students outside the district. The Farmington area is experiencing little growth and school officials say parents who have college-age children are remaining in the district.

"When you lose students, you lose money," said Mark Morawski, principal of William Grace Elementary in Farmington Hills in a previous interview.

The district receives 90 percent of its funding from the state through a foundation grant. Each student enrolled in a district through the Section 105 program brings part of the foundation grant when moving to another district.

The Farmington Public School Board recently approved the Section 105 out-of-district schools of choice plan for the first time after listening to the recommendations of a district committee. There are 20 total openings

in kindergarten through third grade for the 2003-2004 school year. A lottery will be held for open slots at William Grace and Flanders Elementary Schools.

There is no cost for the program and accepted students will be allowed to attend Farmington Public Schools through the completion of high school.

Applications are available at the district administration building located at 32500 Shilwaukee Road, east of Farmington Road in Farmington.

sbuck@oe.comnet
(248) 477-5450

Republican Club schedules May 7 forum

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Area Republican Club will host a Farmington school board Candidate Forum 7-8 p.m. Wednesday, May 7, at Farmington Hills City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

Three Farmington Hills residents - Karen Bolsen, John Goshorn and Cheryl Swalm - have declared their candidacy for the June 9 school board election. One seat is open, with the retirement of current board President Linda Enberg.

The RSVP date for candidates is April 25, according to Valerie Knol, events chair. As of April 17, Goshorn and

Bolsen had indicated their attendance.

"The Farmington Area Republican Club believes providing a forum for the candidates to deliver their goals, beliefs and platform will help the voters make an informed decision on Election Day," Knol said.

The forum will begin with a two-minute introductory statement from each candidate.

Club members and moderators Mike Leads and Chris Cummins will ask the prepared questions of each candidate, allowing one minute to answer. No rebuttals will be allowed.

Knol described Leads as active with the Parent Teacher

Association. Cummins describes himself as a "political activist."

Possible topics will include school curriculum, testing, budget and funding, start times, boundaries and school choice, community involvement, diversity and governmental relationships.

The audience will be given an opportunity to submit questions and the moderators will allow time to ask several of these questions. The forum will end with a two-minute closing statement from each candidate. The forum will be broadcast live on Channel 9 and replayed until the election.

For more information, call Knol at (734) 254-6769.

Hills EDC names Nissan executive to its board

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington Hills Economic Development Corporation has appointed John P. Calandro to its board of directors. Calandro is the director of Human Resources and Administration for Nissan Technical Center North America.

"We are truly fortunate to have a person of John's caliber joining us to help guide the city in the ongoing development of our business sector,"

said John Anhut, chairman of the EDC.

"John not only brings a strong business orientation to the board but an added perspective from his experience as a county commissioner."

Calandro graduated from Michigan State University in 1968 with a degree in Labor and Industrial relations.

The Vietnam veteran has been involved in both civic and professional organizations for years. Most notable was as an Oakland County commissioner from 1981-1991; he chaired the County's Personnel Committee.

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