

# Observer's site registers record usage in April Barbers honored as volunteering's 'elite'

Hometownlife.com, the portal web site for the Farmington Observer, registered record usage for the month of April 2003, according to Dan Sutton, Hometown Digital General Manager.

Total site hits for the month were 20,265,358, nearly double the hits registered last December, while total site page views were 2,575,439, up 17 percent from March 2003.

A more meaningful statistic, according to Sutton, is the total number of unique visits to Hometownlife.com. In January, 2003, the site registered 463,430, up nearly 5 percent from March.

"To see usage gains of this sort on our site is unprecedented," said Sutton. "We are offering a site that brings to Web users the very best of our local hometown newspapers and telephone directories, together with the 2x7, fully searchable

capability of the Web. This is obviously very attractive to our audience.

"Through our sister company, the Farmington Observer, we're also offering digital upgrades for people advertising in the newspaper. These are offer an advertiser great extended reach at a very small price. I suggest you check with your sales representative for detailed information and prices."

Hometownlife.com is the main Web presence for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

It includes local news items from the Farmington Observer, as well as classified ads and retail advertising from the paper. The site also includes fully searchable lists of advertising from the other 40-plus community newspapers in Michigan published by Hometown Communications Network, and as well searchable ads from telephone direc-

ories published by sister company, Michigan Directory Co.

The site offers links to help wanted classified ads placed by employers in Hometown newspapers. Total help wanted viewed this April were 230,923, up 33 percent from March. "With the labor market being what it is, now is a good time for employers to upgrade their staff," according to Sutton. "When lots of people are looking for good jobs, the help wanted advertising on our site offers lots of local jobs, right around the corner."

The site also offers up a listing of up to date real estate offered for sale, downloaded regularly from the MultiListService computer files. For April, a total of 2,504,650 views of MLS real estate search results were logged onto Hometownlife.com. A total of 250,465 detailed listing views

were registered in April and a total of 16,886 unique detailed MLS property listings were viewed by Web users interested in shopping for a home, Sutton said. "This last number is extraordinary. It shows that nearly 17,000 individual houses listed for sale were reviewed in detail by interested prospective buyers, all on our hometownlife.com site."

Hometownlife.com also offers (in the section called "Market Place") ads from Hometown Directory Company's local Michigan telephone directories; a total of 695,416 site page views were registered in April, up 19 percent from March. April views of news items selected from Hometown community newspapers were 296,621, up nearly 20 percent from the previous month.

In addition to maintaining the Hometownlife.com site, Hometown Digital offers custom web design services, together with eBusiness Cards and eBrochures! The company may be reached at (800) 989-4614 or at support@hometownlife.com.

Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates also spoke. "There's volunteering, she said, and then there's the Barbers who have gone above and beyond by serving on dozens of committees and at events in the community."

"Years from now the fruits of their labor will still be seen in this community," she said. "We hope you two come back and see what's sprouted from the many seeds you've planted here."

Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell said the Barbers were in an elite group of volunteers. Deputy School Superintendent Sue Zurvalce said she couldn't imagine two more deserving people to be named Citizen of the Year.

She pointed out the district's school board recently received a national Kennedy Center award in praise of its outstanding support of high quality arts and education.

"That is a direct credit to the Barbers," Zurvalce said.

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

Paul and Fern Barber were honored as the 2003 Citizen of the Year by the Farmington Area Jaycees Tuesday.

"We had many qualified nominees," said Jaycees Citizen of the Year Committee chairwoman Valerie Knol.

Representatives from the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills and the Farmington Public School District were on hand as well as the Jaycees members, friends and family to honor the Barbers, who volunteered their time for the past 37 years to support the arts and music and well-being of the community.

State Sen. Gilda Jacobs was also in attendance.

"I think volunteerism is the most important thing we can do," she said. "It's where the rubber meets the road."

She presented the Barbers with a certificate from the state Senate.

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