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Science wiz finds better door lock

By LYNN ORR

Employees at Automatic Parking Devices Inc. (APD) in Farmington Hills believe they have an electronic wizard on the payroll.

Farmington High School student Joe Hoffman, son of Mrs. Joan Hoffman, transformed an idea he picked up while working in the vocational co-op program at the security system company into a prize-winning entry in the Michigan Industrial Education competition.

Hoffman captured state regional first prizes for his electronic lock, an adaptation of a security device sold by his employer.

"The electronic lock is a simple way to limit access to machinery, power for buildings, entrances to buildings and dangerous equipment," Hoffman said.

Hoffman put his unit into a box for easy access, but the locking device can be mounted on a wall or in a wall for security purposes. The nine-button unit, resembling the pushbutton numbers on a phone, uses a combination code of numbers as a locking device.

APD's security systems use a three-second pulse to allow entry, but Hoffman adapted his unit to use the three-second pulse and a power source that remains on.

"For example, in a school shop, the electronic lock can be used to turn on the main power to the benches and outlets," Hoffman says. "Normally closed push buttons could be located around the room in the event of an emergency."

"If an emergency should occur, a student or teacher need only hit one of these buttons to turn off the power in an instant."

Another advantage of the button code unit is that lost keys would no longer be a problem for tenants. They could simply memorize their codes.

"If someone lost their combination, you could simply change it," says advertising coordinator Kim Resha.

"Or the unit could be hooked up with a card-reader, and if someone lost his card, the central controller could change the combination. The woman who lost her key at the Renaissance Center and was raped in her hotel room could have had her combination changed or she might never have lost the combination like you can lose a key."

Since Hoffman's project allows the power source to remain on, the company may adapt it for sale purposes.

"We do a lot of our work for customers," says Hoffman's supervisor Dave Coulter, a former Farmington co-op student who started working at APD full-time after graduation in 1974.

"We take a product and adapt it for the customer. If there's a need for it, we'll probably make it," Coulter says.

HOFFMAN ATTENDS Harrison's vocational electronic program each morning and then works at APD in the afternoon. At school he works on TVs and other equipment. He learned woodworking from his father and became interested in electronics as a sophomore.

"I had a really good teacher, Bill Pratt, and he got me interested in electronics," Hoffman says.

Next year Hoffman plans to continue working at APD while he attends Harrison until graduation. He'll then start working full-time, perhaps for APD, and attend Lawrence Institute of Technology part-time.

And he also has another goal—to think of something to enter in next year's show. His fellow employees are waiting to see how Hoffman will top this year's entry.



Joe Hoffman of Farmington Hills checks out his prize-winning electronic lock. (Staff photo by Harry Maubue)

Arson suspected at construction site

Farmington Hills arson investigators are looking into the cause of a fire which May 14 damaged a nearly-completed home being built at 38649 Southfarm, in the Haggerty-Hatted area.

Fire officials suspect the blaze started in the garage which was attached to the empty home. When firefighters arrived at 1:36 a.m., the garage roof and part of the house was in flames, according to Fire Chief John Van De Voort.

The house is part of a group of custom-made dwellings being built by Joseph Compo Inc., of 21817 Woodfarm, Farmington. The burned house was ready for occupancy and a family was scheduled to move in shortly, according to Van De Voort.

Insurance executive is elected

William Clancey of Farmington Hills has been elected second vice-president of the Life Insurance Leaders of Michigan. The LIL is a statewide organization affiliated with the Michigan State Association of Life Underwriters.

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5	2,000	41.66	9.15	60	2,499.60	499.60
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