

Family finds neighbors have big hearts

By CORINNE ABATT

It has been a hard month for the William Luckenbill family, but the kindness of both friends and strangers has helped ease some of the burden.

On Aug. 27 Mrs. Luckenbill discovered a fire raging through part of the rooms the family resided on the second floor of the building on Twelve Mile west of Drake.

Luckenbill was out of work and didn't qualify for unemployment compensation. There are five small children in the family and much of what they had was burned or badly damaged by smoke.

The community has responded to keep the family in food and clothing until they can locate a three bedroom house at a rent that will fit a modest budget.

A plea for help was published in the Observer & Eccentric about a week after the fire on the editorial page and this brought added help for the unfortunate family.

"Just about the time when we wonder

what we will do for food, someone comes along with some money to help us out," Luckenbill said.

The ladies from North Farmington brought us a \$50 food order. Then Farmington Lumber sent over \$50 which we used for food. Our landlady, Mrs. Pulte, gave us money for food. Mrs. Pulte said she would help us get into another house."

Red Cross gave the family \$100 for clothing and another smaller amount for food. Others have brought clothing which Mrs. Luckenbill has sorted and said would be fine for the children.

Luckenbill said several families are holding furniture until they can find a house.

One man is saving a davenport and chair for us and another has some beds," he said.

Finding a house is the biggest problem facing the family. They are still living on the second floor of the building that was once a storage area and retail sales room for apple orchards.

The roof of the first floor storage room collapsed this week. The fire apparently affected the wiring in the building. The fuel oil heater is no longer functional. So Mrs. Luckenbill cooks on the one or two good burners on the stove which also provide the only heat for the living quarters.

Mrs. Luckenbill and the five children escaped the fire unharmed except for smoke inhalation.

She rescued one of her twin boys, 3 years old, at the last minute before the flames and smoke made the stairway unpassable.

The living quarters didn't fare as well. There are smoke stains on the walls. The room where the fire started is boarded up. The odor of smoke still permeates the rooms.

Mrs. Luckenbill pointed to the hardwood floor of the living room. Even after the fire it still had a shine on it.

"I mopped and polished these floors

every week. I like to have a place look nice."

Her husband smiled as she said he had put up all of the wood paneling in the living room to cover unsightly walls.

Several calls have come from persons who had homes available with rents of over \$500 a month. The family was offered one home that they could live in for several months.

Mrs. Luckenbill said, "We're rooted people. We don't like to jump around. We would like to find a place, fix it up and enjoy it."

Time is closing in on the family. The nights are cooler and there is no central heating. Luckenbill worked for only brief periods this year because of a back operation last February. He went back to his job in June and was laid off in July. He is a truck driver for Motor Car Transport. Since he didn't accrue 13 weeks at one stretch he can't qualify for unemployment.

The community have been to offer help. It's been a long month. Maybe the next one will be better.

Mrs. Luckenbill said they would appreciate a call from anyone who might have a lead for a house. Their number is 477-3218.



William Luckenbill with daughter Cheyenne checks the want ads for a possible house to rent. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Budget tightens for school

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Declining enrollments, an increase in the State Equalized Valuation (SEV) and the resultant decrease in state aid spelled a financially tight 1975-76 for the Farmington schools.

During the Sept. 21 meeting of the school board, the accounting firm of Plante and Moran revealed the results of their audit of last year's school budget.

In 1972, 16,802 students were enrolled in Farmington schools. The SEV per student was \$19.00.

Since 1972 there was a 10 per cent enrollment decrease and 70 per cent increase in the SEV. There were 14,994 students attending area schools in 1975-1976. The area's SEV rose to \$22,826 per student.

An increase in the SEV results in a decrease in state aid, even though the school district's general cost per child increased.

General costs include operating, maintenance and instructional expenses for each child.

The 1972 school budget allowed expenditures of \$950 per student. These allowances rose to \$1,594 in 1975-76.

Farmington spent \$222 per child, in 1972, \$30 under its budget allowance.

In 1975, the district spent \$1,570 per student, \$24 less than was budgeted.

Although the area's property tax rose 1972-1976 from \$271 per student to \$1,121, state aid decreased.

Four years ago, the district received \$322 per student in state aid. By June state aid had dropped to \$214 per child.

Gov. William Milliken's budget cuts were, in part, responsible for the cut in state aid, according to Joseph Wentrack, Plante and Moran spokesman.

Farmington allotted 76 per cent of its budget to instructional costs. In comparison, Birmingham spent 70 per cent of its budget on instruction and Southfield spent 72 per cent for that purpose.

In spending \$1,000 for a child's instruction, Farmington was slightly over the average amount of \$1,000 spent by in Oakland County Schools.

Southfield's administrators spent about \$1,082 for instruction and Birmingham spent \$1,055.

Farmington's increase in SEV per student was slightly above the Oakland County average of \$2,500. In comparison to the district's SEV of \$22,826 per child, Birmingham's was \$45,500 and Southfield was rated at \$55,000.

In Addition, Farmington spent 66 per cent of its budget on fixed costs, 14 per cent on operating expenses, 35 per cent on maintenance and 34 per cent on administrative costs.

The total assets of the district for 1975-1976 amounted to \$3,878,513, according to the accounting firm.



The Luckenbill children rummage through the clothes donated by many of the generous residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills. (Staff photo)

For alcohol

Hills supports raising age

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Farmington Hills City Council has cast its support to raising the legal drinking age to 21.

In a meeting at this week's council session the body voted 6-1 to support the move which is being considered by state lawmakers. Dissenting was Councilmember Janice Smith.

The use of alcohol stems from parents, said Mrs. Smith. Eighteen year olds already have formed their opinions. I think it would be hypocritical to say you can't handle alcohol at 18.

Mrs. Smith said changing the drinking age would be akin to outlawing obesity and cigarettes because they were dangerous to a person's health.

BUT HER COLLEAGUES endorsed raising the drinking age after listening to State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton. (Farmington) students and parents in the audience.

Brotherton was armed with statistics aiming to show automobile accidents and fatalities had risen substantially among persons 18-21 years old since the law had been changed in 1972.

Mrs. Smith maintained the statistics lied.

"I think we should enforce the laws that we already have. Parents should be made to be more responsible for their children's actions," she said.

Councilman Earl Oppenheuser said the argument of a person is old enough to join the military, he is old enough to drink in clubs.

"I served in the military during World War II and I didn't feel oppressed because I couldn't drink," he said.

Oppenheuser admitted the age limit was arbitrary, but said some limit had to be set.

Councilmember Joan Dudley said she was urging the legislature to raise the drinking age because parents can't handle their children.

MANY PARENTS HAVE abdicated their duties. Sometimes the government has to get into it," she said.

Mrs. Dudley said the age should be raised to "reduce the odds" of mishaps occurring on the highways.

Councilman Fred Lierthman said it was incongruous to expect parents to be responsible for 18-year-old drinkers because by law, 18-year-olds are considered as adults and outside parental legal responsibility.

Dave Pickering, a local district high school student, said it would make little difference whether or not the drinking age is changed.

"The problem arises that older people will get you liquor. If you want it you can get it," he said.

Pickering told council there was only a 50-50 chance a person under 18 would be checked for proof when attempting to buy alcoholic beverages in Farmington area stores.



Strategy session

Planning a door to door drive for ALSA this weekend are (from left) Carol Wolfman and Linda Milosch. Looking on is friend Huggie. The young people have set a \$3,000 goal to raise funds for St. Jude Children's Hospital. The hospital is a research center for childhood diseases. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

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