

# Farmington Observer

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## Rights advocates defeated in boycott bid

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

A bid to disallow Farmington Hills city employees to attend seminars and conferences in states which have yet to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was defeated at this week's council session.

In a 4-3 vote, council members Joe Alkateeb, Keith Deacon, Earl Opperthaus and Jody Soronen voted against the proposal. The resolution was introduced by Councilwoman Joanne Smith. Voting with Smith were Mayor Jan Dolan and Councilwoman Cathy Jones.

In an extended debate which went into the early morning hours of Tuesday, the council residents and representatives from Stop ERA testified to the pros and cons of such a move.

ERA advocates, in recent months, are turning to economic boycott in attempts to force states to ratify the controversial constitutional amendment. Such boycotts, according to Smith, are legitimate. Three more

states are needed for ratification, but time is running out for advocates, with the ratifications needed by the middle of next year.

"BOYCOTTS ARE the only way to do it. Boycotts are better than bullets. By doing this we will be helping women and men everywhere," she said.

Smith also took a swipe at southern states which have either rejected or refused to consider the amendment. "Don't forget they had to be hit on the head before realizing that the color of your skin doesn't make any difference," she said.

Countering Smith's arguments was Elaine Donnelly, national media chairwoman and state leader of the Stop ERA movement.

"The national NOW (National Organization for Women) boycott against states which haven't ratified ERA has nothing to do with advancing the knowledge or enforcements of the many national, state and local laws which spell out women's rights," she said.



JOANNE SMITH

"The very notion that women aren't or won't be persons under the law,



ELAINE DONNELLY

unless this ill-conceived amendment is ratified, is, in itself, a gross insult to

those women who don't need NOW to tell them whether they are persons or not."

She labeled boycott efforts as an attempt by a frustrated minority to impose its will on a majority of citizens. She also pointed to the fact the attorneys general of both Missouri and Nevada have filed lawsuits in federal court against the National Organization for Women because of the national boycott.

THE LAWSUIT charges NOW with conspiring with more than 90 groups to engage in an illegal secondary boycott, in violation of federal anti-trust laws. But ERA supporter Jones countered, saying that courts have consistently ruled against the anti-trust argument as a defense against economic boycotts.

"Courts have ruled that boycotts are a matter of free speech," she said, pointing to the civil rights movement as an example of such a case.

But the majority of council members refused to be persuaded that a boycott was the business of the Farmington Hills council. Opperthaus,

saying he was in favor of equal rights, labeled the boycott proposal as "impractical" and a possible negative morale factor among city employees. He also questioned the legality of a boycott.

"I think it is wrong to support something that is illegal. This could be construed as an illegal secondary boycott," he said.

Alkateeb said the ERA was a "debatable" issue and said a boycott would affect both the guilty and innocent.

"I'm very much in support of equal rights for everybody. But this resolution is counter-productive," he said.

ALKATEEB finished his statement by saying he would vote against the Smith proposal because women were "pretty much" equal, anyway.

But the swing vote rested with Soronen, who felt the boycott was an inappropriate issue to be considered by a local council.

"I don't deny that as a person that I worry about equality, but we must clean up our own act, first," she said.

## Activist for senior citizens mixes faith, family, career

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Once, there was a time when Loretta Conway would count 20 senior citizens gathered at the VFW Hall in Farmington and gaze at the size of the group with elation.

Now, at Mercy Center, she's counting between 120-200 seniors a day. She's still elated.

The Gathering Place has come a long way since the days it was partly financed by the proceeds of the canister next to the coffee pot. And its director and guiding spirit has come a long way, too.

"I'm here through my family, faith, career and school. They're intertwined," says Ms. Conway, 45.

With one more semester to go before she receives her bachelor's in gerontology, a new son-in-law on the way, a place on the Farmington Area Commission on Aging, and a myriad of ambitions to sustain her for the rest of her life, Ms. Conway admits she's enjoying herself.

She earned it after facing the death of her oldest son at 6, a divorce and the death of her sister. She credits her ability to trust in her faith for helping

her build a life that leaves little free time.

"TO BE where I am at now—it's like a miracle. I worked hard for that miracle.

"I feel God has been good to me," she says with a shy smile that manages to light up her face.

"Hard times make you appreciate things more," she says.

After a pause, she shakes her curly hairdo and adds, "But I'm not Pollyanna. I have my bad days, too. This is a good day."

Her good spirits and fascination with people make her seem a natural for her job as director of senior citizen activities. But it was not until her late 30s that she decided what she wanted to do.

"I found out late in life that I can do many things. You have to decide what you want to do and then go after it. You can set your mind to do anything," she says.

Three years ago, after taking care of her parents and being involved in volunteer work, she decided to enter Madonna College's gerontology program.

She plans to graduate with a bachelor's degree in December and readily shares her achievement with friends, family and co-workers, who offered their moral support.

"I love school. I love learning. I have the support of friends, family and seniors. When you have people cheering you on, it's easier. I'm a very fortunate person," she says.

HOMEWORK is squeezed in whenever possible. Sometimes she'll set the alarm for 2 a.m., study until 5 a.m. and then go back to sleep.

"I'm really motivated to be good in what I'm doing. I have to keep up with my kids. It makes up for the sleep I lose," she said.

She plans to continue attending classes after she graduates and through her retirement. Business courses, instruction in sign language for the deaf, and teaching catechism to young teens are some of the plans she has for the future.

"Young people don't know yet that there are so many things you can get excited about. If I was 20 years younger I would detour off into different directions," she says.

In spite of the temptation to explore different ideas and skills, she's managed to stick to her original commitment—senior citizens.

What began as a part-time job requiring only a few hours a week grew until it encompassed a hot lunch program, classes, trips, seminars and coffee klatches with bingo.

"I heard they wanted someone to work part time for a few trips and a

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Loretta Conway listens while Leon DeGrunchy offers some home-spun advice and humor. (Staff photo by Harry Maubte)

## Hills firefighters see action increase

Although Farmington Hills firefighters are answering more calls than in 1976, the number of fire fatalities has remained roughly the same.

Increasing population and the practice of sending the fire department out on all medical emergencies has raised the number of total calls from 1,119 in 1976 to 1,576 in 1977.

That's the picture presented by the department's annual report.

Last year, three fatalities due to fires were recorded by the department. Two men died April 1, 1977 when the home at 21545 Randall, Farmington Hills burned. Mark T. Schumacher, 28 and Michael Baksteloos, 23 died in the fire that is attributed to careless smoking.

The third fire death occurred March 2, 1977 during an automobile accident on Middlebelt, north of Nine Mile.

WHEN a car stopped to pick up a hitchhiker, it was hit from behind by a second car. Craig Hotun, 21, of Southfield, was a passenger in the backseat of the first car. He died from carbon monoxide poisoning and burns when the car burst into flames, according to fire department records.

While the three deaths tally with 1976's two fire fatalities, the cost of fire damage in the Hills has skyrocketed over the past year.

Part of the reason the total fire loss costs rose from \$1,135,400 in 1976 to \$1,456,838 in 1977 were the Farmington Four Cinema blaze and the Muirwood Apartments fire.

Farmington Four Cinema, which burned on Jan 13, totaled \$300,000 in damages. On April 13, the Muirwood Apartment blaze caused \$300,000 in damages.

These blazes prompted Fire Chief John Van De Voort to send out full-time firefighters to inspect construction sites for safety violations.

Other calls answered by the department illustrated its new policy of answering all medical emergencies and smoke investigation related calls.

There was an increase in the number of times firefighters were called in during a medical emergency.

LAST YEAR, the department answered 786 medical aid calls. In 1976, there were 467 calls.

More calls help make the department visible to the community.

"People are more conscious that we're here, especially the developers. We're enforcing the code and we're educating the public," Van De Voort said.



Wildlife  
needs you

As independent as this reindeer at the petting farm on the northwest corner of Ten Mile and Inkster roads, he belies the theme of last week's 41st Annual National Wildlife Week. This year's theme was Wildlife Needs You, and was intended to promote understanding of the need for humans and animals to co-exist in a technological world. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

inside

### FURNITURE SOLD IN THREE HOURS

When Jay Wheeler wanted to sell his Queen Anne 10-piece dining set, he placed a fast acting ad in The Observer & Eccentric classified section. The first day that his ad appeared he received more than 18 calls and sold his furniture within three hours. Whether you're selling or buying items for your home, you'll like the results you'll get from our classified pages. Call us today.

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Club circuit	3B
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Sports	Section C
Classifieds	Sections C-D