

Fire leaves family homeless

By LYNN ORR

A short circuit in a window fan working in 93-degree heat resulted in a fire that gutted another home in the southeast section of Farmington Hills last week.

Throwing her charred purse on the ground, Hilda Alto sobbed in relief that her three children were safe.

Her family's possessions were lost in the blaze that ruined the small home at 21638 Roosevelt.

"My goldfish is dead now," 12-year-old Janine Alto told neighbors gathered around her, as she shivered in the hot sun. Cuddling her cat Fluffy, she told everyone how neighbor Tommy Walker saved the family pet. Bystan-

ders watched as firefighters from Stations 2 and 3 battled the blaze.

Although the interior of the home is considered destroyed, according to District Chief Bob Rebohy, the Alto family is lucky. The family was awake when smoke alerted them to the blaze. Although they have no telephone, Mrs. Alto was able to alert a neighbor, who called the Hills Fire Department. They were able to contain the blaze in the neighborhood of closely-set homes.

No one was injured in the blaze. But tenants Dennis and Hilda Alto lost their possessions. Ironically, they had applied for renters' insurance which wasn't yet in effect. Because the home is uninhabitable, they also lost a place to live.

THE FIRE added one more alarming statistic to the fire incidents in Farmington Hills. Although residential fires are on a pace with 1977 statistics, half of the residential fires recorded this year occurred in the southeast section of the city. Last year, Hills firefighters were called to 66 home fires. Of the 32 home fires recorded this year, 16 occurred in Sections 28, 33, and 34, the southeast section of the city. Eleven of those fires occurred in unoccupied homes—a typical statistic, according to Hills Fire Chief John Van De Voort.

"Whenever you've got vacant property, you've got vandalism," says Van De Voort. And as the income level in a community drops, the fire incidents increase, he adds.

The Hills team has gone out on about 1,100 runs this year, more than half of those for medical emergencies. Field fires, residential fires, and commercial fires account for the rest of the runs. But home fires typically are considered the most dangerous, especially those that occur at night.

For the Altos, the blaze is more than a statistic. "They were just getting back on their feet again, things were going good," says Ella Cairns, referring to her daughter's family. The flowers in the front yard of the Alto home reflect concern for the neighborhood, but three vacant fields around the house are evidence of other fires, says neighbor Cal Waid.

"Things aren't too good around here," he added.

Cities seek to improve fire service

After the demise of a proposed seven-community Fire Cooperative Study proposed earlier this year, Farmington and Farmington Hills are attempting to improve a mutual aid package designed for the two cities.

The proposed cooperative service among Farmington, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield, Commerce Township, Novi, Wixom and Walled Lake advised by a consulting firm died for lack of interest, according to Farmington fire officials.

But the two cities are attempting to improve fire service on their own through a mutual aid improvement package.

Farmington Hills approved the concept last week, while the program will go before the Farmington City Council Monday night.

Improvements to the Mutual Aid System include commitments by the Hills to automatically respond to all multiple family, commercial, industrial, school, nursing home, or other large fires in the City of Farmington. The Hills firefighters also would

respond if the city was already engaged in fighting one fire. Emergency medical backup and extrication equipment would be provided for accidents as well.

In return, Farmington would respond to second fire incidents in Farmington Hills whenever Wheeler St. Station No. 1 or Industrial Park Station No. 3 was committed to a fire. A second-in truck provided by the city would respond to fires within the southern portions of the Hills, according to the proposed agreement.

The City also would respond to any structural fires within sections 28, 33, and 34 in the southeast section of Farmington Hills, according to City Mgr. Robert Deadman.

The proposed agreement, which is tentative at this stage, indicates that the cities would assist each other at the rate of about 12.15 times per year, according to Deadman.

The additions to Mutual Aid System would cost the City of Farmington about \$2,500. Additional costs for Farmington Hills were not available.



Jamie Alto (left) found a hero in neighbor Tommy Walker who saved her cat, Fluffy. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)



Farmington Hills firefighters had to back away at the Alto home to put out the blaze started by a short circuit in a window fan.

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

PRAISE THE LORD—and pass the foot powder. That's what a lot of Detroit Bible College students might be saying after they finish their seven-mile Praise Walk from their old campus in Southfield to their brand new \$2.2-million campus at Twelve Mile and Drake roads in Farmington Hills. Set for Aug. 30, the walk is "our way of saying thank you to the Lord for our new campus," according to Gene Williams, vice president in charge of development at the college. Students, faculty and staff members who wish to participate must be at the old campus, 27810 Franklin Road, by 9 a.m. on Aug. 30. Classes begin the next day, Aug. 31, for the college's 300 students.

WILLIAM LUBAWAY of Farmington Hills has been named to the board of directors of the Eastern Michigan chapter of the Hospital Financial Management Association. Lubaway is an associate with Plante and Moran, certified public accountants in Southfield. The Hospital Financial Management Association is a 31-year-old, non-profit professional association of financial managers in hospitals and related health care facilities.

A NEW GIFT SHOP will open soon at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills, according to Mrs. Shirley Garner, vice president of the hospital guild. Besides working in the gift shop, the guild also has a gift cart, which will continue to serve patients at bedside. The guild sponsors many fund-raising activities, and all profits are returned to the hospital.

TWO FARMINGTON students, Kristine E. Paul and Ann E. Simanek, have received Presidential Scholarships to attend Alma College this fall. Miss Simanek, a sophomore, is a 1977 graduate of Farmington Harrison High School. Miss Paul, a freshman, is a 1978 graduate of Farmington High.

A VEGETABLE gardeners' clinic, sponsored by the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, is set for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 21, in the senior citizen garden area at the Southfield Civic Center, 29300 Evergreen Road. Guests are invited to bring sick plants, learn insect identification and have questions answered related to vegetable growing. There is no charge.

REGISTRATION FOR day and evening college baccalaureate programs at Lawrence Institute of Technology and for classes in the school of associate studies begins the week of Aug. 21. Students who have not applied for admission to the Southfield-based college should complete

procedures as soon as possible, LIT officials say. For more information, please call the office of admissions at 552-0200.

A FLOWER SHOW and boutique of handcrafted items, sponsored by the Farmington Garden Club, will be held from 1-7 p.m. in the Nardin Park Methodist Church located on Eleven Mile Road between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake roads. Admission is free.

THE FARMINGTON Area Commission on Aging will hold its regular monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Aug. 29 in the Farmington City Hall, 22800 Liberty at Grand River. The commission's meetings are open to all interested persons.

ARK WEST LANES is planning a "Disco-Bowl" from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m., beginning Friday, Aug. 25. Proceeds will be donated to the Special Olympics program in Oakland County. A donation of \$5 per person is being requested by sponsors of the event. Activities include disco dancing, disco dance lessons, open bowling instructions and a variety of game machines. Several personalities from radio station CKLW will be on hand to lead the disco party. Ark West Lanes is located on Northwestern Highway south of Twelve Mile Road in Southfield.

FARMINGTON HILLS Parks and Recreation Department invites all persons interested in participating in touch football this fall to a meeting at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 30, in the Hills City Hall, 31555 Eleven Mile Road. Additional information may be obtained by calling the parks and recreation department at 474-6155.

REGISTRATION FOR the fall semester at Oakland Community College will be held from Aug. 30-31 and Sept. 1 according to an alphabetical schedule. Classes will begin Sept. 5. Applicants for the fall semester are still being accepted. Interested students should contact the campus they wish to attend. OOC has locations throughout the county: Auburn Heights Campus, Auburn Heights (852-1000); Highland Lakes Campus, Union Lake (383-7191); Orchard Ridge Campus, Farmington Hills (476-6900); and the Southeast Campus System, Madison Heights and Royal Oak (548-1252).

DEADLINE

Material submitted for The Inside Angle (22170 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield 48034) should be typewritten and include the name and address number of the sender. Items must be received at least one week before publication. Do not send photographs. All materials received become the property of the Farmington Observer.

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