

Stowed away in roost, sign maker plies trade

By MARY GNIEWEK

Ever wonder who makes street signs in Farmington Hills?

The answer is a mortician in a chicken coop.

Paul Sweeney is the sign and traffic technician in Farmington Hills. A graduate of Wayne State's School of Mortuary Science, Sweeney took a sabbatical leave from the funeral business three years ago and joined forces with the Department of Public Works (DPW) maintenance division.

Each time a subdivision is erected, vandalism strikes, or the city sees a need for a new traffic sign, Sweeney is responsible for the product from beginning to end.

Sweeney's base of operation is a remodeled chicken coop behind the DPW maintenance building on Haledale north of I-696. The cramped quarters house sheets of aluminum, reflective sign faces, lettering, a drawing table and an oven.

The shelves are stocked with old and new signs and subdivision maps hang on the walls. Because of overcrowding, an expansion of the facilities is planned this summer.

Sweeney is responsible for making and posting 80 percent of all street signs, including regulatory highway signs, in Farmington Hills. Only country roads are not under his domain.

"Vandalism and theft are big problems," Sweeney complains. "You'd probably see half of our signs in college dorms in Ann Arbor or Lansing."

"STREETS NAMED after people are often a target for theft. And kids throw milkshakes or spray paint on the signs."

Salt and poor weather also destroy them.

These problems keep Sweeney busy. In addition to sign replacement, the demand for new street, regulatory, construction, warning and school signs are constant.

"Most people take them for granted, but we can never catch up with the demand," Sweeney said.

As he perused a batch of new orders and took a phone call about replacement of six signs in critical priority areas, Sweeney's assistant, Paul Pinkowski, sat at the drawing table making a basic "No Parking" sign.

Step one: The protective backing on the sign face is peeled away and Pinkowski aligns the "No Parking" decal against a black aluminum sheet.

Step two: The decal and aluminum are placed inside the oven that reaches a temperature of 190 degrees Fahrenheit. This permanently seals the two pieces together.

Step three: The sign is cooled after a few minutes of baking, edges are trimmed, and it's ready to be posted.

"New international symbols will eventually replace all word signs," Sweeney said, pointing to the stock of picture signs nearby.

One shows a black silhouette of a person on horseback with a yellow background. It was placed on Power south of Eleven Mile at the request of local residents.

"It's not a matter of plopping down a sign. It must be warranted and legal," said sign supervisor Tom Trice.

ADDS SWEENEY: "They teach us in traffic engineering school never to create a hazard greater than the one that

exists. Some signs could cause accidents."

Farmington Hills follows the Michigan Manual of uniform traffic control devices.

"The book gives minimum and maximum sizes for signs. We'd put a big stop sign on a major thoroughfare and a small one inside a subdivision," Sweeney said.

Colors and shapes follow a code: red is stop, black and white are regulatory, and yellow is warning. Round signs denote railroad crossings, diamonds are for hazard zones and stop signs are eight-sided. Guide signs are horizontal and rectangular and school signs are five-sided.

Seventy percent of Sweeney's time is taken up making street signs, because each individual letter has to be mounted on the sign. Interior street signs are 6 inches high and as long as the name requires. Major road signs are 9 inches high, with upper and lower case lettering so drivers can readily identify them. All street signs are green with white lettering.

Reflective signs are made with glass encapsulated sheeting. They're placed on stop, yield and curve signs in high volume critical areas.

SWEENEY SAID the cost of a single street sign is \$80, which includes assembly and installation. That is why the department is concerned about vandalism and theft.

"Our tax dollars pay for these signs. When someone takes a sign, we all pay for it," he said.

"Anyone with a sign they would like to return can give us a call. We'll come out and pick it up."



Paul Sweeney oversees his small empire which guides Farmington Hills' residents to their destinations. (Staff photo by Henry Mauthe)

Planned attack is best in garnering employment

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

There's more to job hunting than reading the classified ads.

Workers bent on finding a new job should pinpoint their areas of expertise and study the first few resumes they are interested, according to two Farmington Hills-based employment counselors.

They advocate study and planning an attack on the personnel department of a potential employer.

To do that, a little self-knowledge

goes a longer way than the classifieds, according to Steven Goren of the Metropolitan Counseling Center in Farmington Hills.

"Many of the ads don't have a job behind them," said Goren, who has a master's degree in school and community psychology from Wayne State University.

About 60 percent of the classified ads placed in a newspaper are being used by the companies as an indicator of the salary rates or to impress stockholders with indications of growth, according

to Goren.

"People do get jobs through the classified ads," he said.

But there are other ways besides looking through those ads.

A worker who wants to switch to a better job or a more satisfying one should begin by studying himself, according to Goren and his partner, Richard Tolin.

Persons should list their interests and their abilities in writing. Taking into account their abilities, they should next write down their goals and the

times when those ends will be achieved.

Many aren't aware of the full range of their abilities, according to the counselors. Women who have worked in the home and who have a teaching degree can be qualified for jobs outside the teaching field, according to the partners.

Once the job hunter comes to grips with his abilities, the next step in seeking new employment is to list the firms in which he is interested.

Some research is necessary before cracking a particular market. Know the company's problems, Goren suggested.

"People are hired because they can solve problems for the person doing the hiring," he said.

Know the name of the person who does the hiring. Use that name in the cover letter which accompanies the resume.

"HERE'S THIS guy who probably hasn't seen his name on the top of a letter in years. Suddenly he sees his

name in a letter addressed to him. He's going to look at it," Goren opined.

The resume which accompanies the cover letter can take two forms.

Persons who have been working steadily can submit chronological resumes. Those who are re-entering the work force write a different type of resume. Instead of listing jobs in chronological order, these resumes, called functional resumes by the men, describe accomplishments, shading experiences to fit the needs of a particular job.

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

THE GOOD OLD DAYS can return for the Redford High School senior class of January 1953 during their reunion on June 16. For further information, call Betty Love at 476-3233.

READING, 'RITING AND 'RITHMETIC might have been taught in school back in '53 but you wouldn't know it sometimes in the Farmington Hills city hall. Seems city employees are using a Xerox machine, these days, according to signs posted around city hall directing potential copy machine users to its location. Angles suggest city employees start watching television specials and take note of the way in which the Xerox Corp. spells its name.

PARENTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN can pick up some educational pointers within the next few weeks at North Farmington High School. Jim Nuttal, of the Farmington school district will present a series of programs dealing with the education and career opportunities for the gifted child. Programs will be presented from 7:30-9:15 p.m. on April 5, 26 and May 7. In order, the programs will deal with: Careers and the Gifted Child, College and the Gifted Child and Education and the Gifted Child.

THERE WILL BE A FREE estate planning seminar at 7:15 p.m., April 5, at Madonna College Science Lecture Hall, room 144. For reservations, call 591-1211.

FROM 6-10 p.m., APRIL 6, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., April 7, in room 117 of Madonna College administration building there will be a seminar on record keeping for the small business owner. The purpose and advantages of good records, planning an integrated systems, methods, security and retention, permanent records will be considered. The seminar can be taken for credit or non-credit. For registration call 591-1200.

OAKLAND COUNTY HEALTH DIVISION will offer a free immunization clinic in Farmington at the First Methodist Church on Warner and Grand River from 9 a.m. to noon on April 12. Immunizations for measles, German measles, mumps, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough are available. A parent or guardian must accompany a child under 18-years-old. Bring previous records of immunizations.

NEARLY 60 HOMEBOUND seniors in Oakland and Livingston counties aren't receiving their hot meals because program administrators are having a difficult time finding volunteer drivers. Persons willing to work two hours a day, five days a week to deliver the prepared meals to senior citizen's homes are needed.

Mileage will be reimbursed at 15 cents per mile. The Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency is looking for paid workers who will receive \$.15 per hour as well as the mileage reimbursement.

Persons interested in either position should call OLHSA at 658-5163.

HEARD OF FISHING IN A BUCKET? Visitors to Livonia Mall can do something along the same lines from April 9 through April 14. Carry your catch home in a plastic sack.

BEGINNING APRIL 9 Wayne State University will be offering "The Growing Years" an interdisciplinary course on channel 56.

THE OAKLAND LIVINGSTON HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY HAS received \$800,000 in crisis intervention-direct aid funds to help nearly 3,000 low income persons in their winter hills. Applicants must present utility shut-off notices for assistance. In addition to paying utility and fuel oil bills, OLHSA's funds can be used to cover such emergency items as blankets and warm clothing, temporary loan of space heaters, emergency furnace repairs, emergency firewood, temporary shelter, food and other supportive services.

Priority will be given to persons facing life threatening situations and to elderly persons 60-years-old and older who meet all eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements include income levels that vary according to family size. There will be no cash payments to applicants. The money doesn't have to be repaid. For information, call 658-5170.

FOR THOSE OF YOU who would like to see the hills alive with the sound of music, the musical will be playing at the Redford Theatre on Lahser in Redford on April 6, 7. An organ recital will begin at 7:30 p.m. Movies begin at 8 p.m.

THE 1979 Science and Engineering Fair of Metropolitan Detroit will be conducted from April 7-9 in hall D of Cobo Hall.

DEADLINE

Material submitted for the Inside Angles, 23352 Farmington Road, 48024, should include the name and phone number of the sender. Typewritten notices are appreciated. Photos can't be used.

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To connect with the Farmington Observer use the following number
• Farmington Observer staff — 477-5450

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