

# Farmington Observer

Volume 91 Number 82

Monday, July 28, 1980

Farmington, Michigan

56 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents

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**A hug for Uncle Charles**

Melanie Churella embraces her uncle Charles 1980 Wednesday night. For more details and pictures of a reception at the Carriage House at the Suburban Life Section. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Substitute launches drive to organize

By MARY GNIEWEK

Teachers who substitute in the Farmington school district are being summoned out of summer break to organize a non-union pressure group to improve working conditions, pay and school policy.

The substitute teacher leading the drive for unity is Gretchen Peterson, who has been fighting a losing battle with school administrators for the past month over releasing names and addresses of the estimated 150 subs who regularly work in Farmington.

Administrators say releasing those names is against district policy and is an invasion of privacy. Mrs. Peterson says she can't speak for the group until she knows who they are and what they want. But the 30 subs she's contacted on her own are all receptive to her idea, she says.

"When I started subbing, I thought 'I'll do as good a job as I can.' I started out enthused, but found I didn't have much control over the situation," she said.

Her experience includes seven years of substitute teaching, the last four in Farmington junior and senior highs.

"I was stepping into a ready-made situation," she said. "Surely someone will organize subs, I thought. I waited and when it didn't happen, I decided to do something about it."

The frustrations of the job are many, according to Mrs. Peterson and a friend, Joyce White, who subs in Farmington elementary schools.

THEY INCLUDE pay — \$33 a day, no benefits, lack of administrative direction, no continuity of policy between schools and a general lack of communication.

"We have the same qualifications, the same professional status as full-time teachers, yet we're treated as non-persons," said Mrs. White.

The two women want desperately to

contact all the subs who work in Farmington.

"Administrators say it's against the law to release that information, but I know other districts make it available," said Mrs. Peterson.

School board trustee Michael Shipice said the final decision on disclosure is up to the Farmington Board of Education.

"The general policy has been not to release names," he said. "It's basically a privacy argument. I think it's a borderline case."

"We'd have to weigh the rights of the subs versus the rights of the public to the list of names."

In a June 6 letter to Robert Coleman, personnel supervisor for the district, Mrs. Peterson requested an orientation workshop for substitute teachers this fall. She still awaits a formal answer.

Contacted Thursday, Coleman said he isn't opposed to the idea, but he hasn't bought the idea yet either. He said the subs are invited to teacher in-service seminars during the school year. That's something full-time teachers are paid for, subs aren't.

"WE'RE GIVEN NO information other than room number when we enter school," Mrs. Peterson said. "We want better communication so we'll be more effective."

"We don't even get a school calendar," added Mrs. White.

Substitutes are on call with the district and usually learn of an assignment the morning they're needed.

"Many times a teacher will request subs days in advance because of a prearranged absence," Mrs. White said. "Yet we don't receive the official call until the morning of the absence, or the assignment goes to someone else altogether."

The subs want parity with first year teachers' salaries: \$56 a day. But the administrative recommendation for the coming school year is \$36 a day, which Coleman says is comparable to rates in surrounding districts.

Substitutes are eligible to unionize separately from full-time teachers' bargaining units, according to Burt Wickham, an administrative law judge with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission in Detroit.

## Cities dispute vacancy data in census count

By MARY GNIEWEK

The City of Farmington Hills, which issued 815 building permits in 1979 making it the fastest growing community in southeastern Michigan, has a housing vacancy rate of 6.5 percent, if you can believe preliminary figures of the U.S. Census Bureau.

City officials don't, however, and expect that figure, and perhaps a recount, will show a much lower vacancy rate.

The city of Farmington is also concerned about census figures which show Farmington with some 103 vacant housing units. City aide Jerry Horner said he has written to the bureau asking for a recount.

The census shows 103 vacancies, he said. "Between 20 and 30 units is more reasonable," Horner said.

The figures recently released by the bureau show that Farmington Hills population increased 17 percent to

56,986 during the last 10 years. (The increase was measured over the populations of the communities of that time — Farmington Township, Woodcreek Village and Quakertown.) Family size during this period struck from 3.6 in 1970 to 2.8 this year.

The population of Farmington reached 11,000 this year, marking a slight increase from 10,329 residents counted in 1970. Family size dipped from 3.3 persons per household in 1970 to 2.4 in 1980.

Officials from both cities are concerned about the census count as more than 100 federal programs, including revenue sharing, use census data as a basis for distributing \$50 billion a year in state and local aid. Each "lost" resident means a loss in operating income.

The high vacancy rate in Farmington Hills' 21,500 households was disputed by building office supervisor Barbara Aldrich. "There isn't that much vacant housing around town," she said.

## It beats the heat

## Program offers skills for future

Attending summer school might not sound like one of the most desirable ways to beat the heat.

But it could produce terrific dividends for more than 200 area students. They spent their vacation since June at the Southwest Oakland Vocational Educational Center.

Students from the Walled Lake, West Bloomfield and Farmington school districts are participating in 14 vocational programs four mornings per week. The regional center serves school districts in the southwestern section of Oakland County.

For some of the students, taking a summer class at SWOVEC is a good way to make up missed credits needed for high school graduation.

For others, the vocational center offers an opportunity to broaden their education and learn a new skill.

But most are looking for hands on

experience, according to SWOVEC counselor Richard Briggs.

"We believe no one should graduate from high school without a salable skill," Briggs says.

Apparently his opinion is shared by the vocational education students who participate in the summer program. This is the eighth year the sessions have been offered.

STUDENTS LEARN how to weld and make major car repairs, how to cut hair and work with fresh or dried flowers, how to cook and prepare food in addition to scores of other skills.

While it's obvious SWOVEC is still a high school — despite its unusual curriculum — students make immediate use of their lessons by putting developing talents to work, most often on other students but occasionally on community residents.

Local residents, for example, can find a reasonably priced and tasty lunch by visiting the center's cafeteria 11 a.m. to noon daily during the school year.

Budding beauticians have their appointment books wide open for area folks in need of a hair cut.

Dried flower arrangements are available from the floral and greenhouse students and even car repairs can be had at minimal costs through SWOVEC's garage.

But Briggs says that since not enough residents take advantage of the SWOVEC offerings, students end up practicing on each other.

"That experience is just as valuable, adds principal Irv Boynton.

By the time vocational education student have added summer school credit to classes taken during the regular school year, many of them will be

qualified to pass state examinations required for certification in such areas as cosmetology and auto mechanics, he explains.

SWOVEC SUMMER sessions ended last week, but Boynton says most of the students will return in the fall for more instruction.

In fact, all the slots for the fall classes have been filled by students from 11 area high schools. That's more than 1,100 students in all.

In the meantime, some of the vocational students will spend the remainder of the summer relaxing, working or preparing for school to resume.

But not the cosmetology students at SWOVEC. They are staying on for more instruction and practice as part of a 1,500-hour program designed to ready them as professional beauticians immediately after high school graduation next spring.

## Canine walker foils thieves in action

Good observation and quick thinking by a 19-year-old resident of West Bloomfield's Pebblecreek subdivision has led to the arrest of three Farmington-area males on charges of breaking and entering.

The Pebblecreek resident, whose name was withheld by police as a safety precaution, observed suspicious behavior by the three as he was walking his dog last Monday afternoon.

Taking cover behind some bushes, he saw two males crouched in front of a neighbor's house, apparently looking in the windows. A third waited in the car.

When the three spotted him, they drove off, according to the police report. But the young man etched the car's license plate number in the dirt, noted damage on the car and gave police "an excellent description of the men," according to West Bloomfield Police Sgt. Bob Scott.

They were apprehended and reportedly confessed to the breaking and entering attempt as well as a burglary

earlier that day on Hartslock Woods Drive in the Powderhorn subdivision, Scott reported.

Lawrence Mendelson, 19, of Farmington Hills and Keith Gregory Grimes, 17, of Farmington stood mute at their

Wednesday arraignment in 48th District Court on two counts of breaking and entering and attempted breaking and entering.

A plea of not guilty was entered on their behalf.

A pre-trial examination is set for Aug. 15 before Judge Carl Ingraham. Examination is scheduled for Aug. 18.

The third suspect is a Farmington juvenile, whose name was not released by police.

## Kids show off their stuff

On a hot summer's afternoon in the shade of a canvas tent, Katie Bohake, 6, painted a picture of a house with two trees and a dark blue and light blue sky.

Her sister, Michelle, 4½, dressed in an identical sun suit, decorated with delicate red hearts her painted letters and birds.

The two sisters were part of the Art-In during the Farmington Founders

Festival. The annual event for children offers young artists a chance to create and parents an opportunity to rest their feet.

Sponsored by the Farmington Artists' Club, the Art-In runs on volunteer time and donated materials. Parents aren't allowed into the art area because, as a sign explains, "children are more creative without adults."

Katie and Michelle, who enjoy vari-

ous art projects, used their favorite colors in their paintings last week.

Katie favors purple, pink, peach and white. Michelle likes pink, yellow, blue and green.

While Michelle painted the birds flitting past the tent, her sister envied apples drooping from trees near the house she put on her canvas.

Such afternoons of looking at the (Continued on Page 7A)

## Police seek suspects in related break-ins

Police are investigating a series of similar home break-ins in Farmington, Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield Township.

Warrants are expected Wednesday against three suspects, two adults and one juvenile.

In all of the break-ins, entry was gained through a bathroom window. In a break-in at a Farmington residence on Hawthorn last weekend, a handprint in a black leather holster and a hunting knife were taken.

Jewelry, including pearls valued at \$300, a gold watch valued at \$300, assorted bracelets and a diamond stickpin, was also missing. One hundred fifty dollars and an additional \$40 in

Canadian currency was taken.

The culprit entered the house by breaking the top half of a bathroom window, unlocking the window and climbing into the home. Three bottles of shampoo lay outside below the window when the break-in was discovered by family members returning from a weekend trip.

The latest break-in occurred Tuesday just a block away from the Hawthorn break-in on Shiawassee in Farmington Hills. Entry was also gained through a bathroom window.

Police believe there is a link between those and four other break-ins which have occurred in the three communities in the past few weeks.

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### Energy tips

Saving energy needn't be expensive. Included in today's newspaper is a special section with information on inexpensive ways to reduce the cost of energy.

In addition, Energy and You describes a source of loans to help pay for insulation. It also lists people you can call and/or write for more energy conservation tips.