

Farmington Observer

Volume 94 Number 1

Thursday, October 14, 1982

Farmington, Michigan

64 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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Student levels dropping

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Official attendance figures, compiled by Farmington Public Schools officials on the fourth Friday of the school year, show enrollment has dipped to its lowest level in decades despite an upward trend among this year's kindergartners.

Total enrollment dropped by 576 students from last year's tally of 11,447 students to this fall's 10,871.

An increase of 109 students was reported in this year's kindergarten class for a total of 689 children starting school compared to last year's total of 579. Demographers predicted the kindergarten class of 1982-83 would begin reversing the downward trend because births in the county, state and nation began increasing in 1976 after the rate reached its lowest mark in 1971. The statistical "bubble" is being called a baby "boomlet" by population experts.

Last year's kindergarten class — now in first grade — has fewer students than any other grade now attending school. It has 546 students this year, 33 fewer than last year which was the lowest in two generations.

The largest group of students currently attending school are the twelfth graders with 1,051 students enrolled. But even that figure shows a decrease of 82 students from last year's senior class which totaled 1,133.

THE LOWEST year for recorded live births in Oakland County, Mich. and the United States was 1971. Therefore, children born in that year are now sixth graders.

Farmington attendance figures show 767 sixth graders this year or 141 students less than the number of sixth graders who attended school last year. No other grade level in Farmington Public Schools experienced a bigger drop than the sixth graders of this fall compared to last year's sixth grade class.

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

In the 22 years Ed Winnicki has owned the Modern Man's Shop, compulsion from Livonia Mall and 12 Oake has put a dent into business at the Farmington Plaza shopping center. Despite the recent influx of new residents in Farmington Hills' north end, "traffic is down — the economy is down," Winnicki says.

Main Street shift Shoppers' eyes shift north

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

It may not be referred to as such, but Orchard Lake Road has become Farmington Hills' Main Street — and local experts are explaining the phenomenon differently.

Grand River, originally the Detroit-Howell Plank Road and the area's major thoroughfare, is no longer the magnet for the masses. In growing numbers, area residents are shopping, doing business, eating and seeking entertainment north of I-696.

"I think most of the movement is

coming from the Detroit area, not from Farmington," said Roger Walker of Farmington Realty.

"People (thinking of moving) look at income levels, population, protective services, police and schools. They're attracted to this area and come in because of the quality of people and their income level."

John Clappison of the Farmington Center Company attributes the development boom in the city's north end less to a population shift from Detroit or Farmington than to the availability of land in Farmington Hills.

"I think businesses (north of I-696)

have pulled some business (from Farmington) but the major growth that's taken place is due mostly to residential development," he said.

"That area has been developed because of the availability of vacant space."

THE CONSTRUCTION of an efficient freeway system and the widening of Orchard Lake Road heavily contributed to the development in Farmington Hills that "began in the 1970s and marched straight up (Orchard Lake Road)," said Farmington Hills City Clerk Floyd Cairns.

"I-696, I-96 and I-475 gave people easy access to homes, and an easy way to get home from downtown (Detroit). You can go in any direction from Farmington Hills — Ohio, Detroit, Lansing, Ann Arbor and Flint — and when I-696 gets finished, the East side.

"The widening gave Orchard Lake maneuverability. You used to have to wait 10 minutes to get onto the road. Now you can get on right away. It had to help those businesses," said Cairns, who lived in the Farmington area in the 1930s when the Detroit Urban Rail-

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Rumpus disrupts court

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

A ruckus erupted outside the chambers of 47th District Court Judge Margaret Schaeffer Tuesday when an armed robbery suspect began tussling with police and shouting obscenities.

The incident occurred at 6:07 p.m. following an order by Schaeffer binding over Derrick Kingsley Walker, 25, of Detroit for trial in Circuit Court on four felony charges. Walker is in Oakland County Jail, unable to post \$25,000 cash bond on charges that he committed an April 7 holdup of a Clark gas station attendant and pointed a gun at Farmington Hills police officer Bert Cook in a getaway.

"I LEFT the courtroom, went to my chambers and heard a noise," Schaeffer said. "A member of the staff said the group was acting up outside and it may be a good idea to leave quickly. We locked the doors leading from the back to the front."

A maintenance man at the court, Charley Hill, said he saw no punches thrown by either the police or the defendant but observed "mostly pushing and shoving." The defendant was "putting up a lot of resistance," says Hill.

"All I've got is a broom to defend myself," says Hill, who watched the melee from behind a counter.

When police officers attempted to lead Walker from the courtroom to the squad car, he bit Public Safety Officer Michael Welchert, according to Lt. Frank Lauffoff, and dented in the door of the car with a kick when placed inside, causing \$190 damage.

WHILE FRIENDS and family were milling in the hallway and shouting, Lauffoff said, only Walker obstructed police. Farmington Police were seeking warrants Wednesday attempting to charge Walker with malicious destruction of police property and assault and

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Experts agree to disagree on counseling for students

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Too many young persons waste valuable time in high school sampling a smorgasbord of courses when they could be laying the groundwork for a business career, says the head of a national management consultant firm.

"Learn all you can about the career or careers that interest you," said Andrew Sherwood, president of the Goodrich & Sherwood Co., a New York firm that does headhunting (recruiting corporate officers), management training and related work for companies such as Allied Corp., Bendis, Mobil, Nabisco, Pepsi-Cola and Seagram's.

"Read up on (careers). Talk to relatives or friends who are in that particular career and get their advice. Then choose the career you want so that you can select courses of study that will provide you with the knowledge you'll need to help you get a job in your chosen field," he said.

"Teenagers (should) begin to plan for their careers as early as possible upon

entering high school," Sherwood said. Not everyone agrees with Sherwood's advice. Many educators believe students can be harmed if channeled too early into a specialized field that might not suit them.

"I guess I'd have to say there aren't very many students I'm coming in contact with, that young, who enter high school knowing what they want to do and can follow that right through high school and college or advanced training or whatever's required in a given field," says Jim Whitledge, counselor at Farmington High School and coordinator of the career information office at the school.

TO HELP students learn where their interests and aptitudes lie and whether jobs are available in the area of their expertise, Farmington High School has a computer terminal and two micro-fiche machines providing students job and career education information.

Whitledge says the career information office was set up partly on the basis of the number of graduates who said

they wished high school had helped them land a job after they left. The counselor has worked at the school since 1964, and said he notices today's students are more "job-oriented" than students in the sixties.

"That's because of the economy, for one thing," Whitledge said. "Students started seeing how difficult it was to get jobs. They became more interested in the employment outlook. They started asking me the job they're interested in will do the job for \$15,000 — less than half of the \$27,000 fee the Michigan Department of Transportation set aside for redesigning the road.

STUDENT Linda Harpe, a senior at Farmington High, said she used the Michigan Occupational Information Services (MOIS) computer bank helpful both times she consulted it.

In addition, she said, she took a written test to help define her interests and career possibilities. The data indicated

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Jobs that correspond to 10th-grader Kathy Korybalski's area of expertise and preference flash up on a computer screen at Farmington High

School's counseling center. Shanon Penrod, a para-professional, (left) helps key in the proper computer commands.

oral quarrel

Where do you prefer to shop in the area?

In recent years a marked change has been noted in the shopping habits of Farmington area residents. While many are doing business at outlying shopping centers, others are taking advantage of newer shopping malls along the Orchard Lake Road corridor, north of the I-696 expressway.

Meanwhile, shopping malls south of the expressway are finding the going tough in battling the newer mercantile centers such as Hunters Square. Still many persons prefer to shop in the old-fashioned downtown area on Grand River and Farmington roads.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: Where do you prefer to shop, in the more contemporary shopping centers recently built in the north end of Farmington Hills or the more traditional shopping malls in the downtown Farmington area?

To answer this question give us a call at 477-5498. You have until noon on Friday to respond. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer to see how your neighbors feel about this issue.

Work to start on hazardous corner

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Work is scheduled to begin today on improving a dangerous stretch of roadway at Grand River near the M-102 exitway in Farmington Hills.

A contract for the work has been awarded to the Kelchris Corp. of Farmington Hills. Donald Davidson, owner of the company, says his company will do the job for \$15,000 — less than half of the \$27,000 fee the Michigan Department of Transportation set aside for redesigning the road.

Since 1980 at least 33 drivers have crashed into a guardrail situated at the end of an access road which runs between the eastbound and westbound lanes of Grand River, from Spring-

brook east to a dead-end in front of the Grand River Drive-In Theater.

DRIVERS WHO are unfamiliar with the area or are intoxicated often fail to bear right on eastbound Grand River where the road curves and runs under the M-102 expressway.

Some drivers continue straight and plow into the guardrail at the dead end. Others manage to stop before the guardrail but turn right heading the wrong way on two westbound lanes of Grand River in front of the drive-in.

Plans call for the construction of a 7-inch-high concrete curb at the western opening to discourage drivers from heading straight and installation of an

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