



Farmington Observer

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Farmington FOCUS

If you have a news item or an idea for a feature story or an action picture with a Farmington area connection, send a note to our downtown office at 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

ACCOLADES continue to roll in for Lewis Schulman, who retired Dec. 31 after nine years as Farmington Public Schools superintendent.

On Jan. 28, the school board voted to give Schulman retirement benefits of \$4,500 in cash and a 1982 Buick Century valued at \$3,800.

In addition, the district's central office building was officially renamed the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center.

WHAT a Valentine's Day! Debbie Gillett, 30, a beautician, and Bruce Bridges, 36, a meat relocater, were married on Feb. 14/15 at the Farmington Public Schools on Friday morning after Tom Ryan asked if any listeners planning to marry on Valentine's Day would like to exchange vows on the radio.

A reception at the station and a police escort followed the 8:35 a.m. wedding of the Farmington Hills couple.

Merchants donated such gifts as rings, luggage, a three-tier wedding cake, a wedding brunch, a wedding photo and flowers.

Tom Ryan's gift to the couple? A collection of Boy George Albums and a hammer.

The couple will honeymoon in Nebraska where Bridges owns property.

FARMINGTON Public Schools special education supervisor Janice Richards will serve on a state-level committee studying Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), according to a report from Graham Lewis, interim superintendent.

The committee will address critical issues and provide guidance to local districts in developing policy for students and staff with AIDS.

KUDOS are in order for Paul Inman Associates, a Farmington Hills food brokerage company.

It received the Outstanding Business Award from the Michigan Special Olympics. Its annual promotion has raised \$300,000 since 1983 for the sports program, geared to the mentally impaired.

AT the urging of residents, the Farmington Hills City Council has prohibited parking on the east and west sides of Metroview Street, between Eight Mile and Colfax.

TO CLARIFY policy, Farmington Public Schools and Farmington Hills have entered into an agreement allowing the schools to use the city's registration records during district elections.

The agreement allows the city to continue to use district schools as city polling places.

INTERESTED in helping keep public television alive on Channel 58?

Cheryl Fulton of Farmington Hills was named local chairwoman for the 18th-annual Channel 58 Auction, which airs April 11-19 on WTVB-Detroit.

She not only will coordinate efforts of other volunteers, but will actively seek donations of goods and services, which should be new and valued at \$50 or more. Almost any type of item can be donated, including appliances, sports equipment, toys, clothing and furniture. To donate an item, call Auction Central: 878-7200.

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — After more than two years of debate, Farmington Hills officials approved preliminary plans for a new police facility. The city council also approved a notice to issue construction bonds worth \$2.7 million.

Retrial eyed in '67 murder case

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

It was 1967. Sharon Ann Merlo was seeking a divorce from her husband, John, and had moved with a 3-month-old son back to her parents' Redford Township home.

On what Farmington Hills Police Capt. Russell Conway remembers as a snowy Jan. 6 morning, Sharon Merlo was shopping a customer's hair when John Merlo walked into the beauty shop on Eight Mile Road, in what was then Farmington Township, and asked to speak with his estranged wife.

The couple went into the back room of the beauty shop, where, as customers in the shop later recalled, the Merlos argued. Sharon then returned to her customer. Her husband followed her, pulled out a .32-caliber revolver and shot his 18-year-old wife four times. Sharon Merlo was pronounced dead on arrival at Bozfoord General Hospital.

After the shooting, Sharon Merlo's parents took custody of her 3-month-old son, Jeff. Although Sharon's mother

has died, her father still lives in Redford Township, Conway said.

Conway can't remember how Farmington Township Police knew Merlo had fled to Philadelphia after stopping at his parents' home in Niles, Ohio. But extradition papers were filed, and Merlo was arrested in Philadelphia and convicted of first-degree murder in Oakland County Circuit Court in the shooting death of his wife. He was sentenced to life imprisonment.

DURING his last 19 years in prison,

Merlo, an avid student of the law, has attempted several times — both through the Michigan Supreme Court and the federal courts — to win a new trial. On his second attempt, U.S. District Judge Stewart Neublitt granted Merlo's request Dec. 27, 1985.

Although the new trial before Oakland Circuit Judge Fred Mester is scheduled to begin March 10, the Oakland County Prosecutor's office is doing all it can to prevent it.

"Currently, we have an appeal pend-

ing (before the U.S. Court of Appeals in Cincinnati) asking that the court prevent the trial from taking place permanently," said Assistant Prosecutor Gary Chopp, assigned to convict Merlo again.

"We are asking for a stay of proceedings pending the appeal," Chopp added. "The most disturbing part is that the conviction was affirmed by our state courts twice."

Whether Merlo killed his wife was never a major question in the first trial

and won't be in the scheduled retrial. Merlo shot his wife before six customers, including a 5-year-old boy, Merlo later confessed to the crime, investigators said.

"THE ONLY issue was whether it was first- or second-degree murder or manslaughter," Chopp said. "He (Merlo) wants to be found (guilty) on less than first-degree so he can get credit

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Firefighting: a constant for him

people

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Last year's Christmas card pictured the Rebtay family of Farmington Hills in front of a burning house — and all five members were smiling.

The photo, taken at a Farmington Hills fire drill, depicts the involvement of an entire family in a firefighter's life, Bob Rebtay said.

A fire scanner in the family's living room and in the bedroom leave nothing to chance. Emergencies always come first.

The 1985 Farmington Hills Fire-fighter of the Year recalls many family outings missed in the past 15 years because of fires and emergencies. Many card games or visits with friends are spent near a scanner in case of emergency.

"Most of our friends are firefighters, or work in fire-related fields," he said.

DESPITE THE missed opportunities, Rebtay expects to be fighting fires and aiding with medical emergencies until he reaches age 55 — at least.

"Sometimes, I wonder how long I'll go," he added.

The firefighter was lauded last October at the department's annual recognition night, where most of the city council, the police chief and members of the department gathered to give gag gifts and "have a lot of fun."

Firefighting is a constant for Rebtay. "Wherever I go, I stop by the station," he said. "If it weren't for the department, I'd be gone a lot more."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Bob Rebtay, a Farmington Hills firefighter for 18 years, commands Fire Station 3, near Grand River and Middlebelt.

When the Rebtays go out of town during the summer, they enjoy weekend camping trips. This year, his 14-year-old daughter and wife are opting for an all-female Florida vacation, while Rebtay and his two sons, 11 and 16, plan to drive east for an unplanned holiday.

REBTOY DOESN'T know how his children feel about firefighting as a career, but "they go to the station a couple of times each week." In the Farmington Hills fire department, no two family members can work at the same station.

Being a firefighter was not Reb-

toy's childhood dream. He grew up in Redford, and in his teens spent two years with his twin sister in Grand Haven as an apprentice baker. He returned to the Detroit area with hopes of landing a better job.

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Stores pull Tylenol capsules from shelves

Many Farmington-area stores cleared their shelves of Tylenol capsules late last week, following reports of a second discovery of cyanide-laced Extra Strength capsules discovered in New York.

They recommended that customers

discard or return the products, and most offered refunds or exchanges for other pain relievers.

Precautionary action was taken nationally last week following the poisoning death of a New York woman after she took a cyanide-laced Tylenol Extra

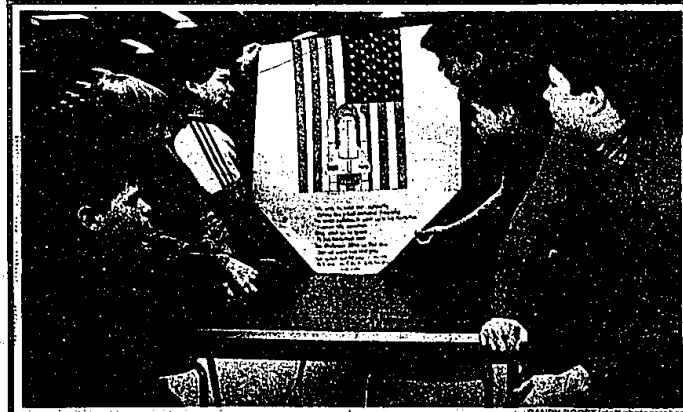
Strength capsule purchased at an A&P Food Store.

The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued national warnings late Thursday for consumers to stop using Tylenol capsules after two additional tainted bottles were discovered

earlier that day.

Although Michigan did not, several states immediately banned the sale of Tylenol products.

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Shuttle talk

Sharon Tuma's sixth graders expanded a discussion of feelings about the recent space shuttle Challenger tragedy into posters that were sent to NASA last week. The Warner Middle School students split into four groups and took three English periods to create posters with original, group-written poetry. "I believe this group really understands death," Tuma said. "They wanted to talk to each other about how they were feeling." From left are Dan Stein, Mike Deans, Josh Tobias, Paul Gilydyia, Matt Hanna, Brad Pugh.

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