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Farmington Observer

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Farmington FOCUS

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

MAYOR Joe Alkateeb has proclaimed Nov. 23-30 as National Bible Week in Farmington Hills.

"For nearly 2,000 years, the Holy Bible has been a moral and spiritual resource of comfort and inspiration, and today its importance cannot be denied as a source of inspiration all of us can turn to," Alkateeb said in his proclamation.

IT'S time to register. Monday, Oct. 6 is the last day to register for the Tuesday, Nov. 4 general election. To vote in Farmington or Farmington Hills, a person must be a U.S. citizen, a resident for at least 30 days and at least 18 years old.

Register at any Secretary of State branch or at the local city clerk's office. People who have moved in the last few years should check their voter registration card to see that they are registered at their new address.

HOURS expanded. The Community Activities Building on Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills will be open seven days a week this fall and winter.

Facilities available for community use include an Olympic-size pool, a weight/exercise room, a multipurpose gym and racquetball courts. For information on special individual, family and group membership plans or group rentals, call the Orchard Ridge Community Activities Office from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays: 471-7599.

TAX TALK. The new federal tax plan will be in the spotlight Thursday, Oct. 2 as representatives from U.S. Sen. Don Riegle's office make a presentation before the Farmington Democratic Club at the Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills. The presentation starts at 7:30 p.m.

MOTORISTS, take note. Farmington Hills City Council has awarded a contract to Motor City Electric Utilities Co. to install a traffic signal at Bunker Hill and 12 Mile. The low bid was \$12,697. The light is expected to be operational about Nov. 28.

The city council has set the speed limit along newly paved 13 Mile, between Drake and Halsted, at 30 mph. Although the speed limit east of Drake is 45 mph, a lower speed limit to the west was approved because of the hilly terrain, concrete curbing and roadside trees. The speed limit on the unpaved stretch of 13 Mile, west of Halsted, will continue to be 25 mph.

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — Farmington Hills City Council candidate Jonathan Grant has resigned his position as vice president of the Farmington Community Library Board of Trustees. Grant resigned Sept. 26 (1985) to comply with a city charter provision prohibiting a city-appointed official from being nominated or elected to the city council. Under the charter provision, a city-appointed official must resign the appointment to seek election.

Hills OK's tax break for Jonna

By Joanne Mollasowski
staff writer

Tax breaks are rare in Farmington Hills.

Yet the Farmington Hills City Council cast aside its caution and agreed in principle to issue the third tax break in the city's history.

In a 5-2 vote Sept. 22, council members upheld an Economic Development Corporation (EDC) recommendation and agreed to consider granting a tax break of about \$2 million to the Jonna Realty Enterprises, a well-known local development company.

The Jonna family plans to develop a more than \$9 million industrial office complex where the Grand Haggerty Auto Inc. salvage business is situated close to what is considered the city's western gateway.

Councilwoman Joan Dudley and Councilman Terry Sever opposed giving the Jonna company a tax abatement certificate.

In her opposition, Dudley reminded council members of an earlier denial of a smaller company's request for tax abatement. If the council is willing to change its cautious policy against tax breaks for large companies, it should do the same for smaller ones, Dudley said.

"BASED ON policy set, I believe there is a strong precedent in this city against tax abatement," Dudley said. "I really think it is time to stop giving the big guys a break to make big money. I have so much faith, I believe they (Jonna developers) can make money without this (tax break)."

Sever offered similar comments. He told council members he sees no need to create incentives for more development. While a tax break would accelerate the site's development, so would the natural supply and demand of the market, Sever added.

Despite Dudley and Sever's opposition, council members considered the proposed project an opportunity to improve and beautify the city's western gateway.

"I don't care how big the development is or how small. To me, this is a unique opportunity to beautify that particular gate," Mayor Joe Alkateeb said.

To help stimulate industrial renovation, expansion and development, the state Legislature in 1974 authorized the use of industrial tax breaks.

Under state law, a local government may grant a tax break of 50

percent of the assessed value of the property.

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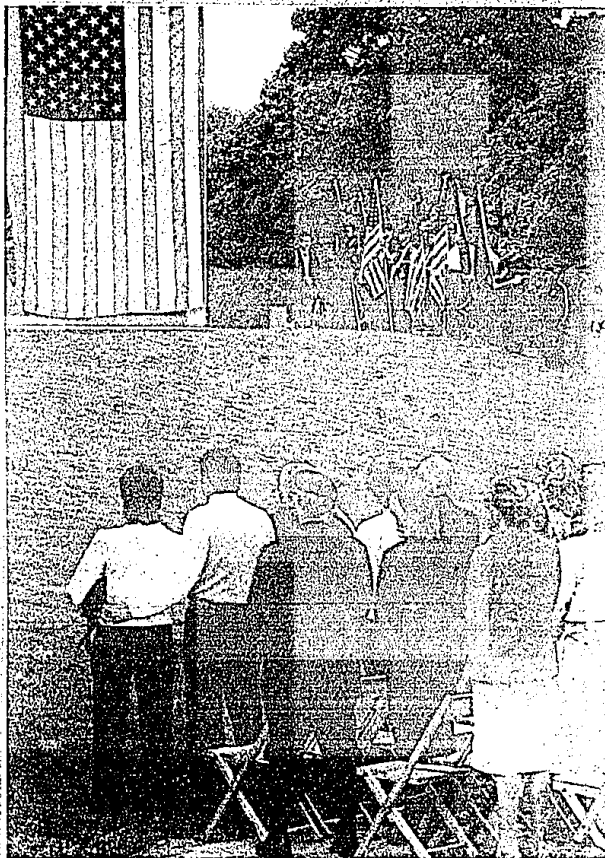
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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Service men and women, their families and veterans of the Vietnam War gathered in Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens to dedicate Michigan's first memorial to POWs and MIAs from that war. The memorial plaque was covered with an American flag during the ceremony. Among those listed is Thomas F. Riggs of Farmington. He was born July 24, 1946, and

was listed as missing June 11, 1967. Riggs was a 20-year-old Army chief warrant officer and a pilot of a Huey helicopter. He was with Staff Sgt. James Nelson from Ludington when their chopper was lost in the night in an electrical storm. For a closer look at the observance, see Page 3A.

Go-getter Energy fuels dream of this corporate leader

By Loraine McClieh
staff writer

Florine Mark practices what she preaches.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Florine Mark, outside the new Weight Watchers Group corporate headquarters under construction on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills.

Svelt and fashionable, energetic and enthusiastic, she is her own best advertisement for the speech she's been giving for the past 20 years.

"Whenever I'm asked to speak, my

talk has the same title," said the woman who brought Weight Watchers to Michigan.

"It's called, 'You Can Do Anything You Want To Do If You Want To Do It Badly Enough,' and it bears repeating."

"Dream the dream and set the goal or it isn't going to happen. Fill the mind with positive thoughts and good messages. Life is for doing. Work up the excitement and then do it," she said.

Mark begins every day with a five-mile, fast-paced walk following a route in the far northeastern section of Farmington Hills.

"That's my energizer, that's when I get my ideas. It's my insurance policy to ensure having the time to play with my grandchildren, read all the books, see all the people, hear all the music, dance every dance," she said.

Mark's high-energy lifestyle is one that she had to learn.

"There was a time when my middle name was Excuse," she said. "Florine Excuse Mark. I know all the excuses there are. All I have to do is hear one of them now and I go into my speech."

MARK SAID she was "born into a fat family." She believes she had tried every diet known to her, and had one traumatic experience with

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