

Group day care homes are safe — Feldman

By Joanno Maliszewski
Staff writer

Group home day care operator Darlene Feldman is prepared for criticism. But she maintains that a fire as small as the one that occurred in her home Wednesday would go unnoticed if it occurred in anyone else's

house, particularly if it was not used for day care.

"The fire happened, not because I had day care, but simply because fires do happen in homes," Feldman said. "It would be unfair to attach day care to the fire."

Feldman credits her 19-year-old day care worker, Kathleen Paradis

of Westland, with ensuring the safety of the five children in the home at the time of the fire. She also believes that repeated fire drills and a plan of exit helped Paradis evacuate the children.

"We pre-planned (for fire) because we have the added responsibility with the children. And it paid off be-

cause it was handled meticulously (by Paradis)," said Feldman, not home at the time of the fire.

Though Feldman expects to receive criticism about her day care operation, particularly in light of last week's fire, she's convinced that her home is safer because of the service she offers.

IN ANY other case, Feldman said, a mother, busy with household chores, would have to seek out and round up her children in case of fire. In Feldman's group day care home — state-licensed and permitted to care for a maximum 12 children — an additional adult is required.

The smaller, family day care homes with a maximum six children are not required to have an additional employee, Feldman said. "A group home is safer in a fire situation," she said. "A watchful adult is on hand. With an adult here, she got them (the children) out instantly. It was much safer than a household fire."

Yet, Farmington Hills fire officials expressed concern about the lack of a smoke detector in or near the playroom where Feldman's day care children play and nap — and where last week's fire occurred. Feldman has a smoke detector in a hall near the kitchen. Firefighters maintain that that smoke detector is too far away from the playroom. That smoke detector wouldn't have sounded until smoke was pretty much throughout the house, Farmington

Hills Deputy Fire Chief Peter Baldwin said.

BUT FELDMAN said the fact that the smoke detector didn't sound "shows you how fast they (Paradis and children) were out of here."

Feldman is convinced of the need for smoke detectors and other safety measures in home day care areas. "I'm one for safety. Personally, I plan on putting in another smoke detector in the den by the playroom."

According to the state Department of Social Services, which licenses group and family day care home operators, only fire extinguishers are required. As a member of the DSS' home day care task force, Feldman said she "is pushing for mandatory smoke detectors and stricter laws for family day care homes."

Though fire officials cannot require private homeowners or home day care operators to install smoke detectors, Baldwin said, firefighters will provide fire safety information to anyone who calls their headquarters at 553-0740.

"It's our hope that something positive can come out of this," Baldwin said.

Day care aide whisks children to safety

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not yet reached that side of the house, Baldwin said. "We are not in a position where

we can go into a residence and inspect (for smoke detectors)," Baldwin said. "But they are necessary, particularly in cases where you have areas where people are sleep-

ing. Early warning is essential to escape. Sleeping areas need to be protected."

Because a fire emits carbon

monoxide, which acts as an intoxicant, people awakened during a fire have difficulty finding their way out of a house even if clear passage can be seen, Baldwin said.

The necessity of having a smoke detector in a home with children is of even greater importance.

"But there really is nothing in the law that requires her (Feldman) to have a smoke detector," Baldwin said.

State law only requires a fire extinguisher in day care homes.

Landmarks are honored

This is National Historic Preservation Week in Farmington Hills.

"Landmarks of Democracy" is the theme for Preservation Week 1987, co-sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission.

In a proclamation, Mayor Ben Marks said the week "provides a splendid opportunity for Americans of all ages to reflect on the contributions the past makes today and to take renewed pride in pre-

serving our heritage for future generations."

The greatness of America is founded upon appreciation of our heritage and upon knowledge of the historic events and places that have shaped our national identity, Marks said.

"Historic landmarks contribute to the economic, social and cultural well-being of our cities, towns and rural areas," he said.

Pointing to several preserved historic houses in Farmington Hills

— the Harger House, Gravin House, Howard House, Spicer House and two Botsford houses — Historic District Commission chairwoman Jean Fox said, "These things are as important to us locally as is Constitution Hall and the Statue of Liberty nationally."

"It would seem appropriate to call this to the public's attention during this year of Michigan's 150th birthday, when everyone should be sensitive to more than touristy affairs."

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FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET FOR 1987-88

Pursuant to Public Act 621 of the 1978 Legislature, Farmington Public Schools will hold a Public Hearing of its budget for the 1987-88 school year.

The Hearing will be held as a part of a special meeting of the Board of Education for the Farmington Public School District at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, 32500 Shiawassee, commencing at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19, 1987.

Copies of the budget for inspection by interested citizens will be available at the Farmington Public Elementary Schools and the Farmington Public Libraries from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, from May 12, 1987 through May 19, 1987.

JANICE ROLNICK,
Secretary Board of Education

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