

# Public safety department 30 years old

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

AS POLICE and fire operations merge in many cities across the country amid controversy, Farmington looks back at 30 successful years of its venture into public safety.

"Many take public safety and mold it to their needs," said Frank Lauhoff, director of Farmington's public safety department, which was created in 1957. "Everybody is a little different."

Farmington's public safety operation has officers fully cross-trained in police, fire and emergency medical operations. While other departments have variations of training and support between police and fire, many do not handle emergency medical emergencies as they do in Farmington.

A special historical note on Farmington public safety involves current city manager Robert Deadman, who moved up through public safety ranks. He was one of the first four public safety officers hired by the city, moving to department director and then to his current position.

ANOTHER, PERHAPS more important note, according to Deadman, is that no citizens or public safety officers have lost their lives due to a fire in Farmington.

Coming to this department from police work in 1974, Lauhoff said he has found "a lot of self-satisfaction" from working in each area of public safety, despite the current controversies surrounding it.

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Although Lauhoff lauds the ways public safety has benefitted Farmington, other cities are considering such a move to save money.

Cost savings are seen "down the road," Lauhoff said, while other benefits are immediate. With a public safety department, more personnel are on the road, trained to handle most anything.

May is Public Safety Month in Farmington, as declared recently by the city council, in honor of the department's anniversary. The public safety department will hold an open house Saturday, from noon to 5 p.m., when the public can tour the facilities on Liberty Street in downtown Farmington.

Farmington was not the first public safety operation in Michigan, but

is considered one of the oldest in the state.

It followed such cities as Oak Park, which formed its department in 1954, Grosse Pointe Woods, which began in 1914, Huntington Woods, which took the step in 1929, and Grosse Pointe Shores, which had public safety as early as 1911.

TODAY, THERE are 26 fully consolidated public safety departments in Michigan and a total of 41 cities that have public safety directors — in varying capacities — on staff. Many were formed in the 1970s and 1980s.

A fledgling National Public Safety Directors Association was formed two years ago and is just beginning to organize and attract members, Lauhoff said.

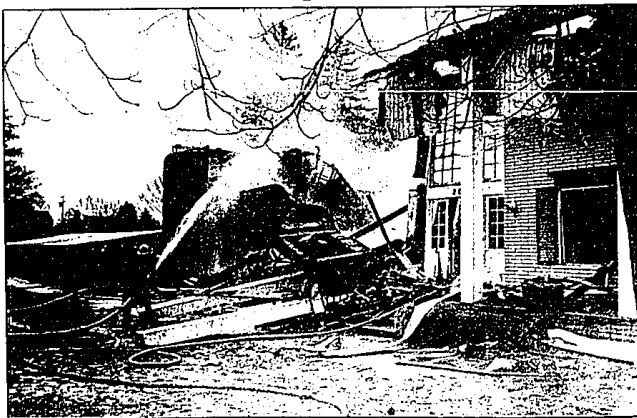
Today's officers hold many of the same values as those originally hired when the department was formed in 1957. Take Deadman, who began his tenure with the city in 1957 as the public safety department came to life.

He recalls one of the city's larger fires occurred several months after his hiring in 1957, when the grocery store at 10 Mile and Orchard Lake Road — then a Great Scott! — burned to the ground.

"By the time we got there, the people were coming out," Deadman said. "As the last of the employees got out of the building... the front of the building blew out. We were able to stop it at the fire wall."

He also recalls fires at a downtown dairy and several apartment complexes over the years. "Help was a long way away" when the Farmington area was more rural, Deadman said. "There were an awful lot of times you were out there alone."

BOTH TRAINING and equipment have improved since the early days, helping both traditional fire departments and Farmington's public safety program to work better, Deadman said.



A spring 1981 fire at Kensington Manor Apartments caused at least \$25,000 in damage and displaced 23 residents. Firefighting is com-

bined with police and medical emergency services in the public safety department.

Today's aerial equipment, larger pumps and diesel engines and automatic transmissions on fire trucks have all added to the community's fire protection. And filtered masks and self-contained breathing equipment have made firefighting safer for those fighting fires.

Fire training will be a major emphasis in the years ahead, Lauhoff added. By 1989, all public safety officers will be at the top level of training, which involves 240 hours. The department is also considering adding a second fire inspector.

"Training is critical — especially when they don't fight these fires each day," he added.

Today, the officers handle about 100 fires each year — the remainder of the thousands of calls are either medical emergencies or police-related calls.

The development of mutual aid agreements and good relationships with other growing communities has helped the public safety department to succeed, Lauhoff added.

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In 1985, Public Safety Officer Thomas Daniels helped an expectant mother with an unexpected home delivery. Daniels is a 20-year veteran of the public safety department.



file photo

In 1984, Commander Peter Amato displayed some of the equipment used by the public safety department for medical emergencies. Amato was the department's first state-licensed Advanced Emergency Medical Technician.



The Mercyaires perform inside Great Scott!

## Mercy raises money

Dads were out for the day at Great Scott! supermarket last week working to raise money for their Mercy High School daughters. The Farmington Hills high school's Dad's Club bagged groceries — with the help of daughters — to receive a percentage of sales and also manned a hot dog stand to raise money for the school's extra-curricular activities.

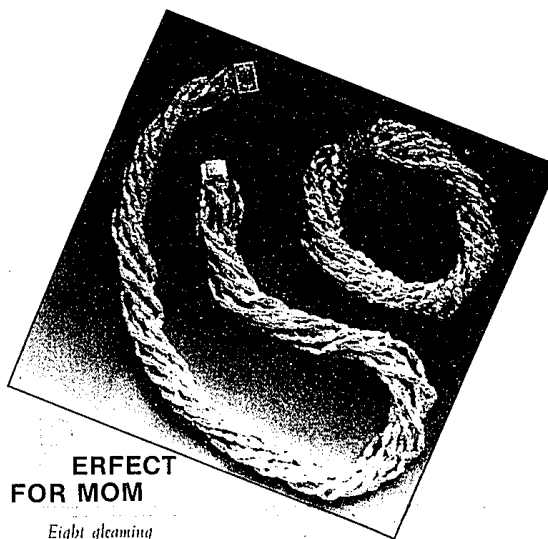
The fund-raiser at Great Scott!, at 11 Mile and Middlebelt, was the first of its kind for the dads and the school. Money raised will be used to support activities such as forensics, sports events and Model United Nations.

The school's Mothers Club was on hand, as well as entertainment provided by the Mercyaires student entertainers.

Staff photos  
by  
Randy Borst



11th grader Lisa Clark-Givens dances with Mr. Peanut, played by 10th grader Charese Sanders.



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