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SALUTING good will, Farmington Hills City Council has by resolution honored the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, which marked its 20th year of regional planning progress Jan. 13. SEMCOG represents a public/private research and development effort for 155 local governments in seven counties. SEMCOG was honored as "a national leader in forging effective partnerships between the public and private sectors at the regional scale."

EASY does it. Farmington Hills City Council has lowered the speed limit on Polson from 40 to 35 mph between Orchard Lake Road and Tuck, a newly paved stretch.

The change was made based on the number of residences in the area, the number of drive approaches near Orchard Lake Road and the reduced speed of the Polson/Tuck curve (20 mph), city manager William Costick said.

HELPING hand. Counselors at all Farmington-area schools were in the spotlight Feb. 1-5. National School Counseling Week.

This year's theme was, "Sometimes the learning process needs a helping hand."

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — State educators called for the creation of development centers for teachers in the wake of low science scores in a statewide testing program for fourth, seventh and 10th graders.

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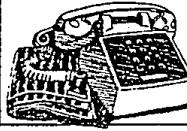
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Hospital lays off 11 to cut costs

By Joanne Mallazowski
staff writer

Eleven Botsford General Hospital employees are looking for new jobs.

The employees were laid off Feb. 3 in the Farmington Hills hospital's continuing efforts to reduce costs, said Gerson Cooper, hospital president.

Hospital officials intensified their continuing cost-reduction program last year by retaining a consulting firm to review hospital operations to determine which areas could be streamlined, Cooper said.

"This process resulted in the elimination of positions on a focused basis and will not involve physicians or staff nurses," he said.

Though 40 positions were eliminated, only 11 employees lost their jobs because some were resigned, voluntarily or were transferred

to other units in the hospital, Cooper said.

"Everybody is challenged to do the same right now," Cooper said, referring to other hospitals such as Sinai and Harper-Grace in Detroit, which are both reducing staff.

Botsford departments affected by the layoffs are biomedical engineering, central sterilization, housekeeping, social work, nursing administration, pharmacy and information services.

AS THE consulting firm continues its review, more layoffs are expected.

But Cooper said the layoffs are not going to be "across the board and not in the numbers seen at other areas hospitals, but administration, department and position specific."

Botsford is not alone in its effort to contain spiraling health care costs, including layoffs. "It is a trend (in the hospital industry) state-

wide and nationally in terms of hospitals refocusing their acute care services and shifting personnel, including a number of layoffs," said Nancy Fiedler, Michigan Hospital Association spokeswoman.

"I must stress that, in most cases, the layoffs are not related directly to patient care," she said.

"What's happening at Botsford is happening throughout the country. It's not unusual. It's just one more sign that hospitals are retooling," said Donald Potter, president of the Southeast Michigan Hospital Council.

Hospitals are taking long looks at their operations, services and staff as the health care market continues to change, Fiedler said.

THE MARKET, Fiedler and Potter said, is characterized by declining general inpatient admissions, rapidly expanding ambulatory and

outpatient services.

Hospitals, including Botsford, are experiencing eroding reimbursement programs and continuing pressure to contain health care costs, Cooper said.

Employers and government have come to believe they are paying too much for health care. At an average \$400-\$500 a day in the hospital, the trend has been toward outpatient services and shorter stays in the hospital, Potter said.

That leads to fewer people in the hospital, which raises the question of "do we need all these employees?" Potter said.

"When you reduce volume, you have to reduce your employee mix."

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Crosstown rivalry

Doug Hoyt of North Farmington (right) tries to escape from the grasp of Farmington wrestler T.J. Armstrong during Thursday's meet that decided the city championship. Armstrong eventually won a 5-0 decision

over Hoyt to help the Falcons claim a 46-24 victory and a share of the Lakes Division crown along with Plymouth Salem. See Page 1C for match details.

Boys Republic fate uncertain

By Casey Hans
staff writer

While Farmington school officials wrestle with plans for alternative programming in elementaries, more than 40 teenagers from Boys Republic are waiting to see where they will attend school this fall.

In changes proposed last week by Farmington Superintendent Graham Lewis, Shilawassee Center may be used for elementary classrooms to help ease overcrowding. If this occurs, the Boys Republic school program currently housed there would be moved.

Concerned parents, the director of the residential treatment facility and at least one Farmington school trustee are also watching the situation closely.

Boys, ages 12-17, live at Boys Republic, a residential treatment facility in Farmington Hills.

The boys have emotional problems

to varying degrees. Some are from broken homes and others are ordered to live there by the juvenile court system. Some have been in trouble with the police.

Assistant Superintendent Mary Lou Ankele has said no changes would be made at Shilawassee Center until the school board adopts a final plan on how the building will be used. The plan is expected to be voted on March 1. The Shilawassee Center also houses a district media center and other programs that also face relocation.

TRUSTEE JAMES Abernethy told trustees and parents at last week's board meeting that he supported the creative educational options offered by Lewis, but is "concerned with the complete working out of Boys Republic." He called on the school administration to produce a detailed plan.

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House debate out of focus — Fitzgerald

By Joanne Mallazowski
staff writer

Dennis Fitzgerald is surprised by the "almost missionary zeal" given to the 62-year-old Eleanor Spicer estate house in Farmington Hills Heritage Park.

"The Spicer house has become too far an issue. It's interesting how people have zeroed in on the house and not the home site."

— Dennis Fitzgerald,
parks-rec chairman

Fitzgerald's comments were prompted by the city council's mid-January decision, at Mayor Jody Soronen's request, to let the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission consider putting it in the city's protected historic district.

The historic district commission will also recommend uses for the one-story residence, on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile.

But parks commissioners thought that was part of their job to develop plans and programs for all city parks and to finance improvements with the five-year, 0.5-mill parks levy.

"We welcome their input, but please respect our responsibility. The task assigned to us was the whole 211 acres. For us to suddenly change the focus is a contradiction of that task," Fitzgerald said.

NOT EVERYONE, however, agrees with Fitzgerald's assessment.

"Since it is a historic home, we should get some

comments about preserving it and its use from the historic district commission since it is indeed their area of expertise," Soronen said.

Some council members balked at Soronen's January request, concerned parks commissioners would consider it "a slap in the face."

Without using those words, Fitzgerald and John Bailey, vice chairman of the parks commission, said some commissioners felt brushed aside despite months of debate and study on the house.

"We didn't feel the historic district commission should not be a part of the thinking process," Fitzgerald said. "The question is how can they be efficient when they don't know about it all the time park concept? Give us the time to do the job they gave us to do."

SORONEN SAID there was no intent to snub the parks commission by involving the historic district commission.



Dennis Fitzgerald

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Man of peace He brings cultures together

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Arnold Michlin lays claim to the title "Biggest Booster" for the Ecumenical Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies.

He sits at the Greater Detroit Interfaith Round Table, the only chapter of the national Round Table of Christians and Jews that changed its name to include Moslems.

He is founder of the American Arabic and Jewish Friends of Metropolitan Detroit, which evoked "a miracle," he said, when he witnessed those of each culture break bread, dance the Jewish hora, and listen to music from the Arabic oud and the poetry of Khalil Gibran together.

"It was a miracle that the dinner even took place, in the middle of last month while every day we were reading in the newspapers about the trouble going on in Lebanon," the Farmington Hills resident said. "We had a couple on the committee ready to call it off. But almost 200 people came — half Jews, half Arabs."

people

"We try to restrict any talk of what's going on in the Middle East," he said of the get-togethers planned for the Arabic and Jewish Friends. "We have enough problems to solve right here."

FOR HIS work in bringing better understanding between peoples of different faiths, Michlin will receive "The Heart of Gold," given by the Women for United Foundation to only a select number of those in the Detroit area deemed "outstanding volunteers."

"I am dedicated to making peace here, may be not in the world but at least here," he said of his work in ecumenicalism.

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Arnold Michlin talks about his lifelong involvement with ecumenical activities that led to his dedication to bring peace between those of different faiths.