

Abuse prevention week April 3-9

Children's problems highlighted

By Joanne Malczowski
staff writer

Farmington Hills officials are taking notice of the growing problem of child abuse.

Mirroring national efforts, the city council Monday declared April 3-9 "Child Abuse Prevention Week."

Elected officials designated the special week as a time when residents are urged to increase awareness of the problem and to "become involved in the prevention of child abuse throughout the year."

The council proclamation was prompted by meetings between city officials and Farmington Hills resident Vernon Kieplinski, who has tried to turn the spotlight on child abuse in the community and the country.

Kieplinski told the council Monday he supports national efforts to stiffen penalties for child abuse.

"... we as a community acknowledge our responsibility to become aware of the existence of child abuse and, as a community, pledge to protect the health and well-being of the families within our community," according to the proclamation.

NATIONALLY, APRIL is designated "National Child Abuse Prevention Month." The designation is designed to draw attention to the problem of child abuse and its "ripple effects," said David Mills, Children's Trust Fund director.

"The whole purpose of designating April is not just to draw attention to child abuse as a problem, but that it shouldn't be a problem. Child abuse is no secret," Mills said.

Communities can be instrumental in solving the child abuse problem. Anything a community can offer in programs and services to strengthen family stability goes a long way in stemming the tide of abuse, Mills said.

In addition to preventing children from being hurt by parents or legal guardians, the need to prevent abuse goes even further. "The nature of the problem is that it shows up in other forms of anti-social behavior. Al-

most every person arrested for sexually abusing kids was abused as a kid," Mills said.

According to statistics, more than 85 percent of the inmates at Southern Michigan Prison at Jackson were abused or neglected children, Mills added.

Since 1984, reported cases of child abuse and neglect have increased in Farmington Hills. In 1987, 40 cases of abuse or neglect were reported. That doubled from 1986, when 20 cases were reported, said officer Sandie Rochford of the Farmington Hills Police Department Juvenile Section.

In Oakland County, from October 1988 to September 1987, 1,843 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported, said Meg Mittel, Oakland County Child Abuse and Neglect Council executive director.

STATEWIDE IN 1986-87, 45,000 cases of abuse and neglect were reported. Five years ago, the number of reported cases ranged 21,000-22,000, Mills said.

"It's going up geometrically," Mills said.

Increasingly, people are becoming aware of child abuse and are recognizing the need to report their suspi-

cions, Mills said.

"The point is that everyone thinks someone else is doing the abuse," he continued. "It isn't related to poverty. It isn't related to ethnic background and it isn't related to race." And as far as Mills is concerned, the child abuse problem is growing.

"It's growing in the sense that the system is recognizing it's there." Years ago, Mills continued, child abuse was a "misused problem."

Runaways, for example, were classified as problem children because they ran away from home. "The truth of the matter is that they were running away from abusive parents."

Both police and social welfare officials agree that people must report what they suspect might be child abuse or neglect. Sometimes, a person outside a family is the only one who can raise a red flag for help, Mills said.

"The problem is personal, and it's isolated," he said.

The problem occurs behind the very private closed doors of a family home. Generally, the victim is too young to communicate what's happening. "And the victim feels guilty because kids believe their parents are good," Mills said.

School board filing deadline draws near

Twelve days remain to declare your intention to run for one of two open terms on the Farmington Board of Education.

The deadline to file nominating petitions is Monday, April 11.

As of Tuesday, only incumbent Helen Prutow had filed. Incumbent James Abernethy, circulating petitions, also plans to seek re-election. Bruce Jacob of Farmington Hills also took out petitions.

Farmington Public Schools voters will fill two four-year terms in the annual district election Monday, June 13. The new terms will run from July 1, 1988 to June 30, 1992.

School board candidates must be at least 18 years of age and registered to vote. Property ownership is not a requirement.

Nominating petitions, signed by at least 20 registered voters, must be filed by 4 p.m. Monday, April 11. Those turning in completed petitions can withdraw from the non-

partisan race before 4 p.m. Thursday, April 14. Otherwise, their names will automatically appear on the ballot.

PETITIONS ARE available from Beti Duschinski, business support services supervisor, at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, 32500 Shawwassee, Farmington, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

She's also available to assist candidates with information about filing and campaign finance laws.

The board of education meets regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. It considers recommendations from the salaried administration and sets all district policies.

Farmington Public Schools encompasses all of Farmington, most of Farmington Hills and a portion of West Bloomfield Township, a half mile north of 14 Mile, between Inkster and Middlebelt.

Friday holiday closings

Farmington City Hall, Farmington Community Library and the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce will be closed Friday in observance of Good Friday.

Farmington Hills City Hall and 47th District Court will be open until noon only. The Farmington Observer will be closed between noon and 3 p.m.

Neither trash collection nor mail service will be affected.

City postpones rezoning

By Jackie Klein
staff writer

A crowd of 200 disgruntled residents from Southfield and Farmington Hills could have shown up at the Southfield Planning Commission meeting March 23 to oppose a planned apartment project in the 11 Mile-Inkster Road area.

Instead just a few homeowners struggled in. Those who stayed away knew the controversial rezoning matter was once again to be delayed, supposedly until the April 27 planning session.

At issue is a 50-acre tract on the east side of Inkster Road between 10 and 11 Mile owned by Southfield Public Schools. The schools want the single-family residential land zoned for a two-story apartment complex so the property can be sold to Occidental Development Co. for \$2.5 million.

THE CITY council last April

turned down Occidental's original plan for a 671-unit, three-story apartment complex. Since then, Occidental submitted a scaled-down, two-story version of the plan. But area homeowners are no happier with this proposal.

The planning commission was supposed to make a recommendation on the plan at its Feb. 24 meeting. But the hearing was put over to March 23.

Assistant planner John Perkowski said the hearing was again delayed at the request of the school board's attorney.

"We knew the public hearing would bring out a lot of people from Southfield and Farmington Hills," Perkowski said. "The attorney for the schools wanted us to hold more study meetings to talk about items such as utilities and sewer lines in the area."

"There's no urgency to get the project started. So we may as well work in harmony. We had the meet-

ings, but the city engineers didn't finish reviewing the community impact study for the proposed development. A consulting engineer will take soil boring tests on the property, and they will be reviewed by the city engineers."


RESIDENTS WHO attended the study sessions and who called the planner's office were aware that the public hearing was to be delayed, Perkowski said. Notices of the meetings are sent to all nearby homeowners, he said.

Area residents in Southfield and in Farmington Hills say adding apart-

ment units will cause serious septic system failure in the section, which is not served by sanitary sewers. They also object to increased traffic, destruction of wildlife and rezoning land suitable for single-family homes.

City council denied the first rezoning bid because the site abuts single-family homes and condominium townhouses and because the requested zoning switch doesn't conform to planned future land use. School board members threatened to join Occidental in a lawsuit against the city if the rezoning is denied.

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