

Toledo: no longer a laughing matter, 6D



All-Area soccer, 1C

Water supply meets demand . . . so far, 4A

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## farmington FOCUS

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**L**IGHTER moment. Amid a discussion about what Farmington Hills' tax rate for 1988-89 should be, councilman Aldo Vagnozzi said in just last Monday, "I know one item we don't overspend on — and that's the fire department tug of war team."

Though brawnier, the firefighters lost to the technique-oriented police officers in the first interdepartmental tug of war June 5.

FARMINGTON Hills has obtained a preliminary injunction to keep Keating Community Homes from using its premanufactured houses on Nine Mile, east of Middlebelt, as models.

City attorney Paul Bibeau said last week he's had "no complaints from staff members" about the company since the Oakland County Circuit Court injunction was granted May 18.

**MEET** the candidates. Voters will get a chance to meet candidates for the 69th state House district seat, the 27th county commission seat, Oakland County prosecutor and Oakland County Probate Court at a Farmington Hills Council of Homeowners candidates forum at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Farmington Hills City Hall Council Chambers, 11 Mile at Orchard Lake Road.

**LOOKING** back into history — The Owen House, home to travelers, was at the southeast corner of Grand River and Farmington Road in downtown Farmington at the turn of the century.

It was moved slightly southeast in the 1920s to clear the way for a bank, now the Village Mall.

From 1926 to 1946, Dr. Lee Holsted had his dental practice on the lower level. Apartments were on the upper level. Arsonists torched the building, by then vacant, in the 1950s.

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## I-696 awareness drive planned

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Motorists will have difficulty teasing ignorance when it comes to the long-awaited widening of I-696 in Southfield and Farmington Hills in mid-July.

"We're going to take a 'no surprises' approach. People just deal better with these things if they're not surprised," said Donn Shelton, Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments communications manager.

When SEMCOG is done, no motorist should have an excuse for not knowing construction crews and equipment will be an everyday sight and difficulty along the freeway.

Signs, brochures, newsletters, a

telephone hotline, community meetings and daily traffic announcements will be part of a SEMCOG motorist information plan accompanying the two-year, \$34-million widening project, Shelton told members of an I-696 community task force Wednesday in Farmington Hills.

Motorists will be informed two weeks in advance of the first day of construction work. Motorists will feel the full effect of construction teups in 1989. The SEMCOG program is targeting the coming winter for a hard-hitting public relations campaign to prepare drivers, Shelton said.

**ANOTHER TASK** force meeting is tentatively scheduled for 2 a.m. Wednesday, July 6, to discuss the

public relations campaign and address Farmington Public Schools concerns about traffic rerouting for school buses during the construction. The meeting will be in the Farmington Hills City Council, 31555 11 Mile.

The freeway, from Franklin Road in Southfield to I-275, will be widened from the existing two lanes to four lanes in each direction for 8.7 miles. Widening the existing four-lane I-696 will ease potential bottlenecks as traffic along the new eastern leg of I-696 flows into the existing four-lane freeway running through Southfield and Farmington Hills, said David Call, Farmington Hills assistant city manager.

The existing median will be used to widen the freeway. The completed eight lanes should be open to traffic

in fall 1989. Sound barriers to buffer residential areas along the freeway will be built, Call said.

The project also involves widening the I-696 overpasses at Drake and Inkster and widening the Orchard Lake Road interchange. Though roadways won't be totally closed during construction, some will be reduced to fewer lanes of traffic.

**ADDING TO** motorists' already hectic driving will be improvements to local and county roads — that might otherwise be used to avoid the construction zone — in the Farmington area.

The SEMCOG information plan will be similar to last year's successful "edgeability" program when the congested north-south freeway

was under repair. But the I-696 project still lacks a catchy, informational name to distinguish it from continuing construction of the new eastern leg of I-696, from I-94 to Southfield, Shelton said.

"We're going to try very hard with our signage and public relations to divert traffic," Shelton said. "This project will be signed far beyond normal. We're going to try to divert traffic from the corridor."

SEMCOG representatives hope to divert motorists from the construction area by warning them far in advance that other routes are available. Though SEMCOG must be careful about detailing detours for motorists, most commuters will soon

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

This is a view of Orchard Lake Road, looking north toward the I-696 overpass, Friday morning. Traffic is backed up, waiting to enter eastbound I-696.

## Project just one of many

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Widening of I-696 in Farmington Hills and Southfield won't be the only construction tie-up to delay motorists in the next two years.

Popular and congested roadways that motorists most likely could use to avoid the interstate freeway construction zone will have some bottlenecks of their own.

In 1988, three major Oakland County road improvements are planned:

- The 12 Mile-Halsted Intersection will be widened. The southeast corner will be rebuilt and a left-turn lane will be extended.
- The 11 Mile-Middlebelt Intersection will be widened to five lanes on all four legs.

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## Opportunity knocks, Welday runs

This is the second in a series profiling each of the six candidates running for the 69th District state House seat. Their positions on specific campaign issues will be detailed in upcoming coverage.

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Politics runs through Paul Welday's veins.

His political steppingstones were placed, starting with volunteer work in college, along a path of local and national campaigns, leading him to start his own political public relations firm two years ago.

The 29-year-old Republican had made no secret of his aspirations for political office. He is competing with three other GOP hopefuls this year for the 69th district state House seat — his first try at elected office.

"I didn't wake up one morning and say 'I'm destined to be a legislator,'" the Farmington Hills resident said. "I'm no different than anybody else, but I see this as an opportunity."

A 25-year resident of the Farmington area and graduate of Farmington High School and Michigan State University, Welday has considered other professions during the past several years. He studied both real estate and law but was pleased



In 1984 to be offered the position of director of the Republican Committee of Oakland County, which allowed him to stay active, full time, in politics.

His affiliation with the Republican Party began as a young boy. His father was active, and his grandfather attended three national conventions. "I'd heard about it over the kitchen

table for many years," he said. "I wanted to see what politics was all about."

**WELDAY BEGAN** his political path with a college internship for U.S. Rep. Jack Kemp in Washington, D.C. In 1981, he worked as a volunteer intern for state Rep. Wilbur "Sandy" Brotherton in Lansing, whose seat Welday hopes to win this year. He won an award for "Outstanding Legislative Intern," which opened his eyes to the bigger political picture.

The experience showed Welday he was "no different than anybody

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Paul Welday  
political aspirant

## Stats man MD can't keep him off team

By Amy Rosa  
staff writer

The 13 Little Farmington Hills baseball players huddle before the big game, slapping hands and yelling, "Go Giants!"

They break and nervously head for the dug-out at Kenbrook Elementary School. The game will be tough; the Red Sox beat them last time.

All the players walk away from the huddle except one, Eric, number 38. This 10-year-old is already in his position, seated in an electric wheelchair behind the fence near home plate, with the team's official score pad propped up on an adjustable lap desk.

It's time for Eric to look sharp now — concentration's the name of the game. Statisticians can't miss anything.

Though he doesn't play in the field with the other Giants, ages 8-9, Eric Meredith of Farmington Hills is just as much a player. The Giants picked him to be their honorary team member this season, making him the

## people

first such player in the North Farmington/West Bloomfield youth baseball league.

Eric has Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy, a chronic degenerative disease characterized by a progressive wasting of the muscles. His symptoms began at age 3, and gradually grew worse. He's been in a wheelchair for the last three years, and has lost the use of his legs and some arm movement. But he can keep baseball stats better than anyone on the team, including some of the parents.

"Parents on the other teams challenge him a lot," said Eric's mother, Sherri. "And each time, they'd walk away shaking their head saying, 'He's right.'"

**HAVING ADULTS** challenge his scoring "is fun," Eric says, "because I know I'm right!"

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THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Eric Meredith dreams of one day playing major league baseball.