

# Torches high

## Relay boosts Olympic spirit

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

**C**OMMUNITY ACTIVIST John Rogin was fired up last week about his two-day U.S. Olympic Team Torch Relay and what it could mean for the Detroit-Toledo area. Rogin said he hoped it would catch the interest of officials who might consider the area as a future site for the Olympic games. The regional relay began Friday, covered 216 kilometers through more than 50 communities and came through Farmington Saturday morning.

"The Detroit and Toledo metropolitan and suburban areas are an exciting arena to stage the Olympic games," said Rogin, a Farmington Hills resident and owner of John Rogin Buick in Wayne.

Friends and associates "encouraged me that what we wanted to accomplish could be done," he added.

**THE EVENT**, which used the original torch from the 1984 games in Los Angeles, coincided with the opening over the weekend of this year's summer games in South Korea.

Juanita Major, a Farmington

Hills resident, was one of about 300 runners involved in the race, but also carried the torch at the head of the relay as it passed through the Livonia area.

Major, 40, was on Southfield High School's track team, but stopped running after graduation, "because there was no encouragement for girls at the time to continue," she said.

She started running for fun and physical fitness about 14 years ago and now runs four miles every day in the Nine Mile and Halsted area.

She said before the start of the relay, "I think carrying the Olympic torch will be one of the most exciting things I've ever done in my life."

Rogin became involved in trying to draw the Olympics to the area after reading a book about the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles by Peter Ueberroth. He credited numerous corporate donors, including prime sponsor Buick Motor Division, plus some 1,500 people involved in making the relay work.

"It will allow people to demonstrate their American pride and history," he said. "I guess I'm a big flag waiver. This is one of the greatest things I could do for my city, community and country."

"If this helps bring the Olympics here, it will all be worth it."

**THE TORCH** relay is expected to raise \$50,000 through torchbearers paying \$325 up per kilometer. The money will be used to help fund U.S. Olympic teams.

In a proclamation read when the regional relay stopped outside city hall Saturday morning, Farmington Mayor Richard Tupper declared Sept. 17 as U.S. Olympic Relay Team Day. He urged citizens to support the U.S. Olympic team effort.

At the Farmington Hills City Hall soon after, Mayor Jody Soronen, who briefly ran with the torchbearer, read a proclamation that said the torch relay "represents the same courage, determination, discipline and patriotism that are hallmarks of the Olympic games themselves."

"The Olympic games bring people and countries together in a battle, not of destruction, but for excellence in sports," she said. "The Olympic arena of nations becomes a peaceful, but competitive, gathering as athletes go for the gold."

Staff writer Loraine McClish contributed to this report.



Photos by RANDY BORST/Staff photographer

Torchbearer Bill Harrison of Westland runs Hall Saturday morning. Soronen then read a proclamation supporting the Olympics.



Rachael Callcut (left), 12, and her brother, Jacob, 15, of Commerce Township, brought the torch through downtown Farmington Saturday morning. They are listening to Farmington Mayor Richard Tupper read a proclamation of support for the Olympics. Next to Tupper is John Rogin, of John Rogin Buick in Wayne, who helped organize the Torch Relay for the Toledo-Detroit area.



The Torch Relay procession makes its way into downtown Farmington around 8 a.m. Saturday. Safety, former Olympic medal winners and a truck for members of the media.

# Faxon seeks higher cap on homestead tax credit

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

State Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, believes other communities should join with him and Farmington Hills in urging legislators to increase the Homestead Tax Credit.

Faxon is co-sponsoring Senate Bill 292, which would increase the existing \$1,200 homestead tax credit — or circuit breaker cap — to a maximum \$2,400 to provide at least \$48 million in added tax credits for homeowners who spend more than 3.5 percent of their household income on property taxes.

"We are one of the highest property tax states in the nation," Faxon said. "When you look at the enormous increase in property values, people are almost being priced out of their homes."

Faxon lauded the Farmington Hills City Council for taking notice of the plight of some homeowners. They sent a resolution to the state Legislature requesting an increase in the state's homestead credit.

Prompted by councilman Aldo Vagnotzi, the resolution followed a presentation of a report in June by city assessor Dean Babb on the property tax assessment system and how to make it more equitable.

"We need relief for both senior citizens and non-senior citizens whose taxes have gone up faster than their income," Vagnotzi said.

**RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY** senior citizens, complained to the city council in June about increasing

property values and their increasing difficulty in paying higher taxes.

According to Faxon, state equalized property values increased 156 percent for Oakland County homeowners and 247 percent for residents of Farmington Hills.

"If you bought a house 10-15 years ago, today's tax proration exceeds the principal and interest payments," Farmington Hills assessor Dean Babb said.

Faxon's bill also calls for an increase in the amount of rent in excess of household income that is used to determine renters tax credit. The percentage of rent used to figure the share of their rent that can be deducted as property tax also would increase if the bill passes muster.

But some city council members expressed concern about how the state would make up the loss of revenue if more tax credit is given to property owners.

SB 292, according to Faxon, would mean an estimated \$8.8 million in reduced state revenues. The total includes the estimated \$48 million in relief to homeowners with the remainder for renters.

Though some are concerned about the potential for state revenue loss, Faxon believes it's the governor's job to draft a budget based on whatever revenue the state has.

"IT'S HOW much of a priority he wants to set his budget to. It's up to the governor to see how he can factor it in. We have a number of programs that add and subtract revenues from the budget," Faxon said.

"It (circuit breaker increase) is the least expensive solution because it takes into account individual family income."

But Vagnotzi said that perhaps the proposed increase to \$2,400 is a bit too high. Assessor Babb echoed similar sentiments.

"It's probably higher than it needs to be. You have to analyze the fact that your typical tax bill in this community is \$2,400-\$2,500. If you go up to \$2,400 (circuit breaker cap), everyone could take advantage of it."

"The question is, has been, always will be, where does the money come from. That's always going to be the problem," Babb continued.

Sull Faxon maintains that increasing the circuit breaker is more equitable than increasing sales tax, generally considered regressive because low- to moderate-income residents pay a greater portion of income in taxes.

The Homestead Property Tax Relief provides a way for taxpayers to link property tax to household income as a means of making the tax system fairer.

The circuit breaker is a device through which taxpayers can receive credit for an amount of their property tax that exceeds a certain percentage of household income for the years.

Under the act, senior citizens currently can be granted a credit when property taxes exceed 3.5 percent (if household income exceeds \$6,000) of their household income with a maximum \$1,200 rebate.

# COORDINATES

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# Work begins for '90 census

The 1990 federal census is two years away, but preliminary work already has started in Farmington Hills.

The Bureau of the Census has hired 8,000 temporary census workers (enumerators) to help prepare a master address list for use in delivering census questionnaires to every household in the nation.

These workers will go door to door counting heads and houses, and taking notes of correct addresses. They'll sometimes ask residents about their housing unit.

Temporary census workers will be hired to work in their own communities. The census bureau advises all residents to ask census workers who visit their homes to property identify

themselves. There have been cases where unauthorized people have impersonated census employees.

Each census worker will wear a red, white and blue identification badge. On the front, the badge carries the title "U.S. Census Enumerator," the name of the enumerator and the date the credential expires. The enumerator's signature appears on the back.

This badge must be worn by all enumerators working in an official capacity.

**SOME FIELD** work for the decennial census is a day's notice of the work will occur from January through August 1990; the heaviest activity will be in April and May.

From the census, statistics will be obtained that are needed to apportion the seats of the U.S. House and redistribute state aid to local governments.

Billions of dollars in federal and state assistance to local governments will be allocated based on the next census. Developers will use census tract information to plan such projects as schools and shopping centers.

Questions about an enumerator's employment can be directed to the Farmington Hills Police Department at 474-6111 or the Bureau of the Census Regional Census Center office in Southfield, 334-1990.