

Callers don't represent Farmington firefighters

The Farmington Hills Fire Department is not part of, nor does it condone, the Michigan Professional Firefighters' telemarketing drive for financial support, Deputy Chief Peter Baldwin said.

"Every year, this problem comes around. As a department, we never see any money from them," Baldwin said.

The fire department's 12 full-time firefighters are members of the Michigan State Firefighters Union.

Local 2659 of the International Association of Firefighters. By affiliation, they also belong to the Michigan Professional Firefighters (MPF).

"Our recommendation is to not give money blindly — especially to telephone solicitors. Our department never solicits by telephone. We're taxpayer supported," Baldwin said.

A man who identified himself as a volunteer firefighter called Farmington Hills resident Ken Wasmer last week to solicit a donation on the premise that it would go directly to the local fire department.

Wasmer said he queried the caller

and was assured the man represented the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

"I asked, 'Are you specifically the Farmington Hills Fire Department?' He said, 'Yes, I'm connected with the Farmington Hills Fire Department,'" Wasmer said. "The conversation led me to believe I was talking to a volunteer fireman. So I made a pledge."

ON WEDNESDAY, when he received a MPF telemarketing invoice that didn't list the Farmington Hills firefighters union as a local affiliate, his wife called the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

That's when he found that Farmington Hills not only doesn't condone the telemarketing drive but also doesn't directly benefit from it.

"I'm sending the invoice back with a note about why I'm not paying," Wasmer said Thursday.

MPF donations help support a quarterly magazine and periodic seminars for professional firefighters.

"Proceeds from firefighter sales accrue to help us finance our continuing efforts towards improving the fire service to the citizens of Michigan, to finance our efforts toward fire enforcement, to meet the needs of our legislative programs and to

represent the professional firefighters in Michigan," reads a letter to donors from Lawrence McColl, president of MPF, which represents 6,000 full-time firefighters statewide.

LT. MICHAEL Garr, Local 2659 president and a fire education specialist, said his union strongly discourages MPF's telephone solicitations in the city.

"Our people get the magazine. But since I became president two years ago, none of us have taken part in any of the seminars," Garr said.

The contract with the telemarketing firm doing the solicitations ends in December. "Hopefully, this problem will go away," Garr said. "Hopefully, they'll look at other ways to raise money."

"The firm was not supposed to solicit in the Hills. But I was told that because it dealt with thousands of telephone numbers, it couldn't always be certain that residents in our city weren't contacted."

"We're interested in maintaining a good image in the community," Garr added. "Anything that paints us any other way, we resent deeply."

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Both sides claim their man won Thursday's presidential debate

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chair of College Republicans.

"Dukakis is a national unknown. This isn't a race for governor, it's a race for the presidency."

Vagnozzi criticized the number of "handlers, spin doctors and damage-control people" that have roles in this presidential race. "The candidates are more managed than in previous years," he said. "Maybe we should put the consultants on the ballot. They are coming up with these one-liners."

Vagnozzi added: "The debates are the best thing we have to judge the candidates."

VAGNOZZI PREDICTED a close race.

He contrasted the U.S. presidential campaign that begins two years before the November election date with a similar race in Canada, which involves only six weeks of campaigning.

He also drew historical comparisons. "Truman wasn't a dynamic speaker. In today's parlance, he wouldn't get past the primaries."

Both see a similar voter turnout to the 1984 presidential election when

the turnout was 72 percent of registered voters in Farmington Hills and 79 percent in Farmington.

In other campaign races, Vagnozzi predicts re-election for U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle, D-Michigan, against Republican Jim Dunn of East Lansing.

He also predicts success for Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, in the 69th district state House race against Democrat John Dolan of Bingham Farms. "It's a tough district for a Democrat," he said.

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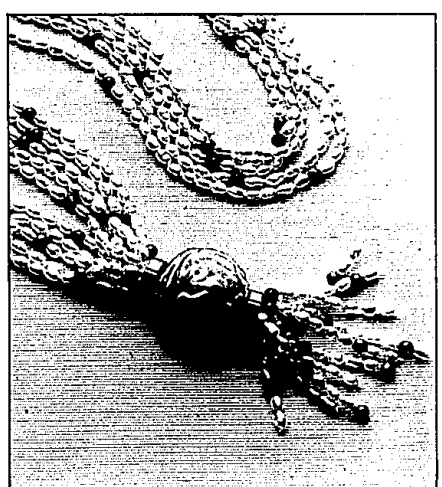
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