

# Sting shows unit is effective

By Casey Hans and Jackie Klein staff writers

Oakland County and Farmington-area law enforcement officials believe ongoing action by a regional, undercover police agency is helping to curtail car thefts.

Officers from Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Novi and the Oakland County Sheriff Department make up the Southwest Oakland County Auto Theft Team unit, which recovered more than \$1 million in stolen cars and trucks last week, resulting in 47 arrests warrants and 15 immediate arrests.

Last week's sting was the largest to date for the unit, which is funded through the Michigan Automobile Theft Prevention Authority.

"The program . . . is a major reason why auto theft in the state is on its way down while the rest of the nation is experiencing increases," said Oakland County Sheriff's Capt. Glenn Watson.

**THE 3-YEAR-OLD, \$5-million theft prevention program is financed through a \$1 surcharge on auto insurance policies, which began with 1986 legislation designed to help toward the estimated 29,000 vehicles stolen in the Detroit metropolitan area each year. Ninety percent of the vehicles stolen across the state each year are from the Detroit area.**

The three-month sting, which recovered 93 vehicles, was done in cooperation with the National Auto Theft Bureau, the Oakland County prosecutor's and executive's offices plus several insurance companies. Watson said at a Feb. 10 press conference in Southfield.

None of the cars recovered in the sting were stolen from the city of Farmington, but public safety director Frank Lauboff said the vehicles were "from (cities) all around us" and from other states. Five of the recovered cars in the sting operation were stolen in Farmington Hills.

Auto thefts in Farmington last year were up from 25 to 33, but Lauboff said that was still way down from the 1983 high of about 60.

"I look at that as just a minor increase — it's still one of the lowest rates in five years," he said.

**FARMINGTON HILLS also had a slight increase in auto theft rates between 1987 and 1988, rising from 315 to 335.**

But in looking at trends during the past five to 10 years, law enforcement officials see an overall decrease in auto theft, which they attribute to more auto theft investigators and concentrated efforts of the undercover police tactical and patrol units.

"The large drop-off in 1987 was due to the auto theft unit and the increase in enforcement," Lauboff said. Auto thefts in Farmington totaled

58 in 1986 before dropping to 29 in 1987. Farmington Hills police Chief William Dwyer agreed the program is good.

"It has to be a concerted effort to make any significant impact," he said. "These are the types of units that are needed. I think the sting operation concluded last week was very successful."

**TO BEGIN** the recent sting operation, officers put ads in the Detroit News and Oakland Press looking for late model cars, under the guise of operating an auto brokerage, said Mark Goodrich, Oakland County detective sergeant in charge of the auto theft unit. Eleven full-time investigators participated in the sting.

"We dealt with a loose confederation of associates, who found that one auto thief was taking delivery of a luxury car stolen by another thief," Goodrich said.

More than 70 of the recovered vehicles already have been returned to their rightful owner. In some cases, possible insurance fraud is being investigated.

Novi detective Ron Roy, an officer assigned to the auto theft unit, said this week the real work has just begun. "We still have to round up every- one," he added.

Staff writer Bob Sklar contributed to this report.

## police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

**ARMED ROBBERY**  
More than \$100 was taken from Hungry Howie's in Farmington Hills by a masked man who implied he had a weapon.

The man, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and a blue duffle over his face, entered Hungry Howie's, 21010 Farmington, at 1:50 a.m. Sunday and approached the register.

With his left hand in his sweatshirt pocket, the man, implying he had a gun, demanded money from an employee. After taking the money, the man, thought to be about 30, ran from the store, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

**DELIVERY MAN ROBBED**  
A Domino's Pizza delivery man was robbed of a pizza by a man who implied he had a gun in Farmington Hills Tuesday night.

According to a Farmington Hills police report:  
As the 18-year-old delivery man drove into the parking lot of an apartment complex on Jefferson Court at 11:50 p.m., he noticed a car following him.

When he parked in front of a lit apartment sign, the trailing car pulled behind his, blocking it.

A passenger then approached the delivery man, asking if the pizza was for a certain address. A short conversation ensued.

The delivery man refused handing over the pizza for what appeared to be a fake \$20 bill. The other man then tried to grab the pizza.

When the other man implied he had a gun in his coat, the delivery man handed over the pizza, valued at \$9.14. Both the robber and his accomplice were thought to be in their late teens.

The residents for whom the pizza was intended were unaware of the robbery.

**SUSPICIOUS SKATER**  
Three girls, ages 8-11, skating at Bonaventure Skating Center, 24505 Halsted, saw a man with what appeared to be the handle of a gun or knife in his waistband at 2:10 p.m. Saturday.

The man, thought to be in his 20s, tried to skate alongside and flirt with the girls, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

**SUSPECT NABBED**  
Farmington Hills police officer John Markey assisted Michigan State Police troopers in arresting a suspect involved in a chase on I-696 Saturday.

According to a Farmington Hills police report:

The car that troopers were chasing struck another car and left the roadway along I-696 in Farmington Hills at 4:40 p.m. Saturday.

The driver ran north toward the Delta Dental Building on 12 Mile. Markey found a man matching the driver's description walking along 12 Mile, near Bunker Hill. The 37-year-old man from Brighton was turned over to the Michigan State Police.

**2 ARRESTED**  
Farmington Hills police executing a federal arrest warrant took into custody two people at Mulwood Apartments Monday night.

A 21-year-old Detroit man was arrested on a charge of distributing cocaine. A 23-year-old Farmington Hills woman was arrested on a charge of harboring a fugitive.

They were held in the Farmington Hills Jail for U.S. marshals, according to a police report.

**CAR DAMAGE**  
Several cars were damaged or broken into around Orchard Lake Road and Leelanau Feb. 10-12, according to Farmington Department of Public Safety reports.

One car incurred \$75 in damage and had an entertainment unit valued at \$350 stolen Feb. 10.

On Feb. 11, a car had a tire slashed, causing \$100 in damage.

Sometime between Feb. 11-12, a car had its T-top broken, causing \$300 in damage.

Several streets away on Folkestone, another tire slashing caused \$75 in damage Feb. 11-12.

**THEFTS REPORTED**  
A snowmobile valued at \$3,000 was reported stolen from a yard on Oxford between Jan. 20 and Feb. 12.

Jewelry, money and a 337 Magnum revolver valued at \$41,775 were reported stolen from a house on Valley Forge Feb. 10.

A desktop personal computer valued at \$6,000 was reported stolen from Penske Planners, 28124 Orchard Lake, Feb. 10-11.

A VCR and other items valued at \$2,450 were reported stolen from a house on Collingham Feb. 11.

Cassette tapes, a power booster, cash and a purse all valued at \$210 were stolen from a car parked behind the Civic Theatre in downtown Farmington Feb. 11.

A purse and its contents valued at \$50 were reported stolen from a shopping cart at K mart, 37175 Grand River, Farmington, Feb. 11.

An Oakland Press box valued at \$200 was reported stolen from outside Farmington Coney Island, 30985 Orchard Lake, Feb. 12-13.

# Dolan criticizes cleanup plans

Gov. James Blanchard's environmental cleanup initiatives are weak, said state Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, after his State of the State address.

"The governor's proposal to create a state Superfund modeled after federal Superfund laws begs a couple of pointed questions," said Dolan, whose district includes Farmington, Beverly Hills, Franklin and Bingham Farms.

Blanchard last week called for a state Superfund law that would require responsible parties to clean up hazardous wastes and allow the state to collect triple damages from those who fail to do so.

"Just how closely will it resemble the federal program that many consider to be a miserable failure?" Dolan asked. "Will it fall victim to the compromises, long court battles and poor leadership that have led to long delays and inadequate cleanups?"

The most alarming element of the governor's environmental agenda is his willingness to impose joint and several liability, without regard to fault, on owners and former owners of contaminated land, Dolan said.

"This could subject innocent purchasers of property to liability for

the full cost of cleanup of contamination that occurred prior to their purchase of the land," she said.

"We also need to provide incentives to prevent contamination and identify and remove obstacles that discourage responsible landowners from restoring contaminated property," she said.

**QUOTING CRAIN'S** Detroit Business, Dolan said the federal Superfund has cleaned up only 50 contaminated sites in eight years. That's 50 out of 1,300 enrolled in the program and 30,000 identified by the Environmental Protection Agency. "That's hardly a model program," Dolan said.

Voter approval of an environmental and recreation bond program last November sent a clear message that state residents want more action and are willing to pay for it, Dolan said.

She said Blanchard ignored this message by proposing to eliminate general fund support for the Environment Response Fund "and rely entirely on bond sale proceeds for cleanup."

Blanchard called for developing rules and funding by this summer for projects to be financed by the \$800



Jan Dolan state representative

million environmental and recreation bond program approved in ballot proposals C and D.

Program objectives include cleaning up hazardous wastes and finding alternatives to solid waste landfills.

Blanchard's environmental cleanup agenda also includes:

- A statewide recycling opportunity law and expanding the bottle bill to include juice containers.

- Rewarding recycling and waste reduction by spending \$100 million of the \$150 million in Proposal C on landfill alternatives.

- A pollution enforcement and research trust fund financed with fines and penalties assessed against polluters.

# Agencies set hours for holiday

The U.S. Postal Service will operate on a holiday schedule the day observed as Washington's Birthday, Monday, Feb. 20.

Farmington Hills City Hall will be closed that day, not open as previously reported. But Farmington City Hall will be open.

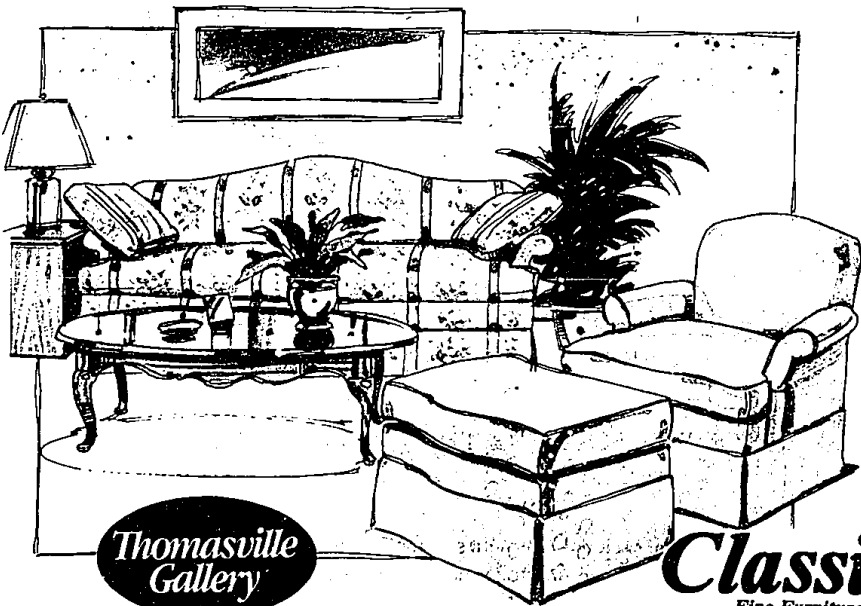
The 47th District Court in Farmington will be closed Monday.

Farmington postmaster Kenneth Harris said there will be no regular residential or business mail delivery Feb. 20. Special delivery, express mail and post office box service will be provided. Limited caller service will be available only for customers who regularly pick up their mail at both facilities 8-10 a.m.

Mail will be picked up from all residential collection boxes as late in the day as possible to meet first class mail service standards. All business collection boxes, with the large 5:00 decal, will be picked up after 5 p.m.

Washington's actual birthday is Feb. 22.

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