

Theater notes boost in sales

By Darrell Clem
staff writer

Ticket sales at the newly remodeled AMC Americana West Six Theater in West Bloomfield have been dramatically boosted by the addition of two new screens and crowd-drawing summer films.

"So far, so good," Kevin Sullivan, general manager, said. "We've been extremely busy. We've been selling out practically every show."

Ticket sales have increased an estimated 20 percent over this time last summer, despite a continuing healthy market for videocassette rentals, Sullivan said.

"I think people still enjoy going to the movies instead of sitting around the house," he said. "We get a lot of the dating crowd."

The remodeling project resulted in two of the theater's large movie houses being split, increasing the number of screens from four to six. Theater owners had tried to expand the complex by buying more land, Sullivan said, "but that fell through."

The project has given local moviegoers two more choices in a theater "pocket" that last summer included only seven screens — four at Americana West and three at the nearby Old Orchard theaters.

"We were missing a lot of moviegoers," Sullivan said. "There's always been a demand in this area for more movie screens."

The shortage resulted in late runs of some movies, such as "I Love You To Death," that drew large crowds despite earlier runs at other theaters, he said. "But now we're getting more of the big movies, and we're getting them earlier."

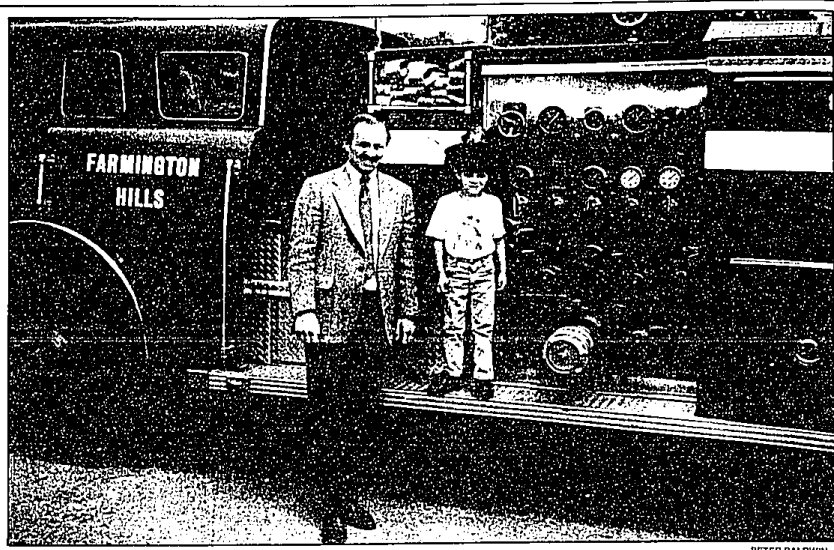
Such crowd-pleasers as "Back To The Future 3," "Total Recall" and "Bird On A Wire" have boosted sales at Americana West, which was remodeled over three months at a cost of between \$275,000 and \$350,000, said Jim Fox, AMC district field manager.

Aside from adding two screens, the project included remodeling the lobby and concession stands and improving the parking lot, Fox said.

Despite the project, videocassette rentals remain strong at the Blockbuster Videos store, just to the north, where such movies as "The Fabulous Baker Boys" and "Fat Man and Little Boy" are drawing customers. "Steel Magnolias," which was scheduled for video release Wednesday, also is expected to be popular.

"People are lining up for that one," said Michael Perkins, Blockbuster assistant manager.

Though it might appear that movie theaters and video stores would be in competition, Perkins said the opposite is sometimes the case. For example, frequent moviegoers at AMC Theaters now receive free rentals at Blockbuster, Perkins said.



PETER BALDWIN

Acting chief

Acting Fire Chief Jack Larabee, 5, stands on the running board of Engine No. 3 at Farmington Hills Fire Department Headquarters. He was chosen to be acting fire chief by auction at

Larkshire Elementary's annual fun fair. Jack was treated to a ride and lunch, courtesy of Fire Chief Rich Marinucci (left).

Malpractice lawyer draws on her experience as a nurse

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

It took Southfield attorney Beverly Hires four long years of intense effort to legally prove the severe handicaps of a Livonia youth are the result of an "oversight" during his birth 14 years ago.

The youth, born with the assistance of forceps after a long and hard labor, is brain damaged and suffers from cerebral palsy.

Hires contends the attending physician at birth erred in not performing a Caesarean section. The case was recently settled for \$2.07 million, money enough to meet the youth's needs for life.

The settlement "evened the score, so to speak," said Hires, who strongly believes victims of medical malpractice deserve to be financially compensated.

"Americans have certain rights. They are entitled to certain expectations, including the expectation that someone will not harm them."

"If there is an error of omission, a failure to do something, to take reasonable steps to avoid an injury, the harmed has the right of redress."

Hires' perspective is born of reasoning based on training in both the law and medicine. She is a licensed attorney and a registered nurse.

"BECAUSE OF my background, I'm better able to understand the medical aspects and then thoroughly and effectively prosecute my cases," Hires said in explanation of her specialty as an attorney. She handles only medical malpractice and drug product liability cases.

After graduating with a degree in nursing from Wayne State University in 1976, Hires worked in area hospitals for three years when she decided on a career change. After briefly considering medical school, she entered the law program at the University of Detroit, paying living and tuition costs with employment as a nurse.

After graduating from U of D in 1982, she practiced alone until Janu-

ary when she, trial attorney Michael Materna and attorney Fred Cluster, who specializes in product defect liability, opened a new partnership in Prudential Town Center.

In considering new cases, Hires speaks at length with potential clients, ascertaining whether there is basis for a suit. Many incidents do not warrant legal action, and new laws, enacted in 1986, limit the time in which suits may be filed. Victims who have been injured prior to 13 years of age must initiate legal action by age 15. Victims over 13 years of age must start action within two years of the incident.

"A good attorney investigates first," and then takes action, according to Hires.

ONCE A CASE is accepted, Hires "develops a picture of what actually

happened from a medical point of view," by gathering medical records and consulting medical specialists. She maintains certification as a nurse.

"Then, I attempt to develop a sense of what happened," working as an attorney to digest the facts but, in the manner of a conscientious nurse, questioning each fact.

Malpractice suits, she said, are not intended to punish the medical establishment. Rather, they "trigger the system to compensate" those who have been wronged.

Hires disputes claims that such suits account for increased insurance costs or for a shortage of qualified medical specialists in rural areas.

"People like to blame lawyers or the injured. Lawyers, especially, are

fair game."

In fact, Hires counters, one of the primary reasons for increases in rates is because the insurance industry is poorly regulated. "There is no accountability," And, she adds, there have always been shortages of medical specialists in rural areas.

"IT BOTHERED ME. It made no sense, an otherwise stable child recovering normally from surgery. Suddenly, she's dead," Hires said, reflecting on a case she is currently handling.

The child, a four-year-old from

Wayne County, died in the hospital following blood vessel surgery.

"It shouldn't have happened."

After months of painstaking and tedious searching, in which "I left no stone unturned," Hires believes she has found the answer. The child died of poisoning.

Sodium Nitroprusside or Nipride, injected intravenously during hospitalization, is commonly used to control blood pressure during and after surgery for a variety of ailments, including brain and heart disorders. The drug contains cyanide.

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