

## Community Corner

This week's question:  
What was the worst thing ever to happen to you?

We asked this question at the Koney Island Inn and the Little Professor Bookstore in Farmington.



"Nothing really bad has happened yet. Knock on wood."  
— Chris Fanaras  
Farmington



"As a waitress, I accidentally dumped broccoli soup in a customer's purse. That was pretty bad."  
— Shannon Evans  
Novi



"I retired from my job as custodian in the Madison Heights Lamphere school system after 20 years. I really liked that job."  
— John Romanin  
Farmington Hills



"I once had my wallet stolen. Somebody picked my pocket."  
— Richard Horstoin  
Farmington Hills



"I got sick and got cancer. But I think I've got it beat and so does my doctor."  
— Walter Sobleray  
Farmington



"Going to jail for driving with a suspended license."  
— Tom Gannon  
Farmington

# Kroger officials say superstores are the future

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Kroger Co. officials believe that full-service superstores are the future. That causes some concern for Farmington-area leaders.

"The vast majority of consumers are elated. They prefer the selections combo stores have to offer," said Michael Layne of Marx Layne public relations, which represents the Kroger Co.

But many residents in the Grand River-Halsted and 13 Mile-Orchard Lake Road areas — where two neighborhood Kroger stores were closed in December — are more concerned with the convenience of a neighborhood store to which they can walk

or take a short drive.

Kroger's merchandising director Ron Spurlock acknowledged residents' frustrations. "It's important to put a store that's convenient for each and every citizen. Anytime there's a change, people have an adjustment period to go through."

Change is difficult, but the 40,000-square-foot-plus superstores are the trend of the future, he said. "We felt like we were positioning ourselves to service all of the trade area," Spurlock said.

RIGHT NOW Kroger has the new superstore at 12 Mile and Halsted (43,000 square feet), one at 14 Mile-Farmington (39,000 square feet), a year-old store at Gill-Elm

14 Mile (47,000 square feet) and an older one at 11 Mile-Middlebelt (29,000 square feet), which is expected to be expanded within the next two to three years.

But some city officials are concerned about the superstores. They have seen too many such trends and their effect on the community.

"Each time that occurs the existing store is insufficient to meet the needs, they abandon them. The problem is not while they are there, but when they leave. We are left with huge facilities that don't always lend themselves to another use," Deadman said. "It's a dilemma. I don't know of any easy answers."

McShane agrees. "I'm not a judge of demographics, but I don't quite agree the superstores are the wave of the future. Our population is aging. They don't want to walk football fields. And people don't want to lose their sense of community."

SPURLOCK, however, said the 12 Mile superstore, for example, has been well-received. The superstores cater to the two-income families and others who like the convenience of being able to shop, bank and buy specialty foods all at one location.

Spurlock also said traffic problems at Grand River-Halsted were also a problem for their Kroger store. But he acknowledged that while market studies were conducted

to determine what people want in the superstore, "a focus study" was not completed. "We didn't realize there were that many people who are immobile."

Still, Spurlock supports Kroger's decision. "People don't realize that the grocery industry operates on a small margin, less than a penny to a dollar. Every cost is important to us."

"We can't just not try to maximize the value of our assets. It's a competitive business. We are charged by our shareholders to maximize."

Staff writer Casey Huns contributed to this report

# Kroger eyes plan to shuttle seniors to superstores

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grocer from buying the store.

"HOW ARE they going to succeed? This is not a children's neighborhood," London said, referring to Kiddie Land.

Despite some residents' accusations, Kroger officials said they have not tried to prevent competing grocers from leasing or buying their empty buildings.

"We would lease to a grocery store. And we would sell a lease back to a landlord. Our object is to get the best economic value we can," said

Ron Spurlock, Kroger's merchandising director in Livonia.

Aware of residents' anger, Spurlock said, Kroger officials want to work out problems. They believe the answer is in some kind of transportation program that can shuttle residents — particularly those who can't or don't drive and used the neighborhood stores — to Kroger's other facilities, such as the superstore on 12 Mile.

"We're committed to getting it worked out very quickly," Spurlock said. "I don't know whether we'll expand on an existing transportation service or do something new."

Spurlock is working out details with city manager William Costick, who in turn is talking with senior citizens specialists in the city about the senior citizen van service and whether there is a role for Kroger in the program.

"They've clearly expressed the desire to do something," said Costick, who expects to meet again with Kroger officials in April.

Spurlock said he doesn't know whether Kroger would entirely finance the transportation program.

"We would certainly be a subsidizer of the program,"

FARMINGTON HILLS Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi calls any plans for a transportation program "a step in ameliorating a situation they created." But he also believes Kroger should foot the entire bill for any transportation program from which the company obviously will benefit.

Farmington city manager Robert Deadman said any transportation program "will be helpful" but won-

dered whether it will be used. "They (residents) may be mad enough they won't follow the Kroger store."

Farmington councilwoman JoAnne McShane, who put the public spotlight on residents' concerns and anger, echoed their demand for neighborhood stores. "That doesn't address the rest of the people" of other ages who also signed the petitions demanding a neighborhood store, McShane said.

"The best solution would be to re-lease the Orchard Lake-13 Mile store

to another grocery market. Then residents from Baptist Manor (on 13 Mile) could walk to it," Vagnozzi said.

Kroger's Spurlock admitted company officials "were negligent in communicating with the community. We didn't do it as well as we should have."

But Spurlock said the closings of the two stores were announced well in advance and that 40,000-square-foot-plus superstores are the current trend.

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