

Sizzling swimsuits
in Street Scene, 1D



All-Area
honors, 1C

Easter baskets
are all-edible, 1B



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Close call: Family flees fire

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Bill Gribeck believes that if he had not been downstairs when fire broke out in the living room of his house on Middlebelt just before 11:30 p.m. Thursday, his family may not have survived.

"As soon as we walked out, the (front) window collapsed," Gribeck said Friday morning as he and his wife, Terri, returned to their house with insurance company representatives.

The fire, which fire officials and

investigators believe was accidental, gutted the first floor. "Gribeck said the upstairs was untouched by flames though the heat melted a television and VCR.

"We think it's fortunate this didn't erupt when everyone was asleep. It was a swift fire, in terms of development," Farmington Hills deputy fire Chief Peter Baldwin said. The Gribeck's smoke detector did not activate.

"We're looking at the electrical. We're trying to zero in on a specific cause," Baldwin said.

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Terri Gribeck sorts through a charred briefcase with her husband, Bill, as they review the fire damage to their Farmington Hills house Friday.



After being up all night, Terri Gribeck (right) returns to the scene of her charred and gutted house Friday, where she is kissed by her younger sister Lori Gultwooly of Livonia.

Photos by SHARON LEMIEUX

Haggerty connector gets OK

Project now eligible for federal funding

By Tim Richard
staff writer

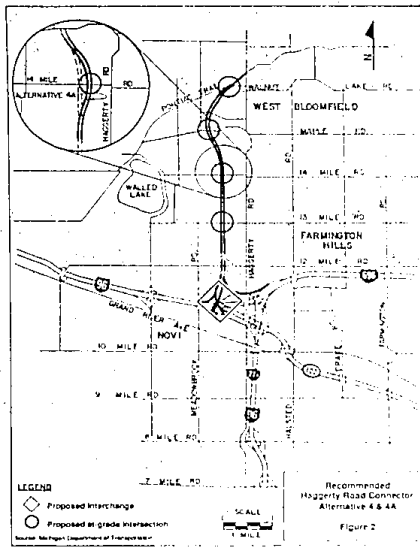
A regional planning agency has put its stamp of approval on a new state highway to relieve congested Haggerty Road in western Oakland County.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, with one dissenting vote, Thursday approved a layout and specifications for the "connector," making it eligible for federal funding. The state still must perform an environmental impact study.

"The traffic is already there," said Joanne Van Tassel, supervisor of Orion Township in northern Oakland, defending the Haggerty Improvement.

SEMCOG also asked for a bike path along the \$79 million controlled access road, which will run from the intersection of the I-96, I-696 and I-275 freeways north to Pontiac Trail.

"We can agree (to the bike path)," said William Harwig, representing the Michigan Department of Transportation at SEMCOG's General Assembly meeting. "We have said we will make right-of-way available."



THE DISSENT came from Gary... Please turn to Page 2

Vets to welcome Gulf war soldiers

By Susan Buck
staff writer

The welcome mat is out at Farmington-area veterans organizations whose members are anticipating the arrival of armed services personnel returning from the Persian Gulf.

Membership ranks haven't swelled just yet but organization officers are eager to inject new blood into their aging membership rolls.

"We haven't seen any increase, yet," said Pete Kulhaha, senior vice-president of the Veterans of Foreign War Broadhead Post 2269 in Farmington Hills. "They're still coming back. We're just waiting now."

The VFW Post, at 2344 Orchard Lake Road, has 234 members. Most reside in the Farmington area, said Kulhaha, a Farmington Hills resident.

Kulhaha served in World War II and the Korean War.

"Some of our members are retired but maintain memberships in Florida," Kulhaha said. "The number of our active members is small."

The VFW assists at veterans hospitals in Ann Arbor and Allen Park. "We bring members from the hospital to the hall to play bingo," Kulhaha said. "We bring them a little stuff. They just like somebody coming to visit them."

THE VFW requires that prospective members have served in wars overseas and received certain awards and ribbons, Kulhaha said.

"It's hard to keep track of local people who served in the Gulf. I have been involved with various support groups who have been trying to get some names," Kulhaha said. "I just couldn't get it. It's very confidential."

During Operation Desert Storm, more than the usual American Legion members attended meetings at Northwest Post 190, 23529 Nine Mile Road. The 200-member post plans to recruit new members as soon as possible, said Arthur Schreiner, a World War II veteran who serves as the post's judge advocate.

The U.S. Congress prohibits the nationwide American Legion from recruiting new members from a war until an official date is given to the war's ending.

"We're a nationally chartered organization," Schreiner said. "We have to wait for Congress to set the date for eligibility before we can accept Persian Gulf veterans. A resolution from our national organization is in the hands of Congress. The VFW charter is different. They can accept veterans anytime."

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Local cops say L.A. beating tape 'embarrassing,' sparks questions

By Joanne Maliszewski
and Casey Hans
staff writers

Law enforcement officials in Farmington and Farmington Hills say they are fielding questions about the brutal police beating of a Los Angeles man, caught on videotape, earlier this month.

They are also assuring residents that officers in the two cities are constantly aware of citizen rights and that similar action here would be severely punished, prosecuted and could be grounds for dismissal.

"People think if one officer does

Related story, 5A

it, everyone does it," said Frank Lauboff, public safety director for the city of Farmington. "They don't see the person — they see the uniform."

"That's why when something like that happens everybody (in the department) takes it personally. It was embarrassing — that's what I felt and that's what most officers felt."

Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer called the Los Angeles incident "intolerable and totally uncalled for. I support full prosecution of the officers."

"In 27 years, I have never seen or heard of such a case," he added. "It just shocked the entire county, including our officers here."

FOUR OFFICERS, including a supervising sergeant, were charged with felony assault in the March 3 beating, in which victim Rodney King was hospitalized after being arrested, then kicked or beaten with a stun gun. King has sued the city for \$56 million — \$1 million for each

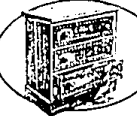
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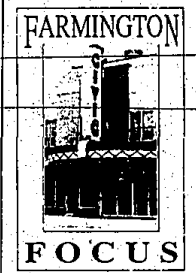
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HERE'S NO place to sit at Chairs Unlimited.

That's because the business, located on downtown Farmington's main corner, is out of business. The Downtown Development Authority and the building's owner are looking for a new tenant.

"I don't know... I can only conjecture," said Wendy Strip Sittsamer, the DDA's executive director. "I guess they went out of business, as sometimes happens."

The recently-renovated property is listed with Thompson-Brown, a Farmington Hills-based commercial Realtor, she added.

"We tend to look at vacancies as opportunities to address the mix of retail and service businesses," she said. "I hope we get retail in there. That display window is so nice. It's just not the kind of place where you'd want desks and telephones."

Anyone interested in the space should call Thompson-Brown (583-8700) or the DDA (473-7878).

ON THE CALENDAR in the Hills Branch of the Farmington Community Library. Monday, April 15, will have a big red circle around it.

Two events of note are scheduled for that day.

One is the 1991 Battle of the Books hosted by the library's Young Adult Department. The event, involving 20 teams of Farmington-area sixth-graders, will take place in the auditorium of the Farmington Hills Branch, 32737 W. 12 Mile Road.

Each team of six has read 10 young adult novels selected by the library staff. The "battle" involves answering questions about the books they've read.

Following the competition, award-winning author Caroline Cooney will speak to the group and sign copies of her books. Cooney will visit middle schools in the Farmington area during her two-day stay.

Both the Battle of the Books and the author's visit are sponsored by the Farmington Friends of the Library.

The lights at the Hills Branch on 12 Mile will blaze later than usual that night, April 15, to help procrastinating taxpayers, who may be burning the midnight oil.

That library branch will stay open until 11 p.m., although normal book checkout and reference service will end at 8 p.m. Federation and state tax forms will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Sets also will be available for photocopying.

For more information on these programs, call the library at 553-0300.

MEMORY LANE — From the March 29, 1991 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

Justice of the Peace John J. Schulte and police chief Joseph G. DeVriendt turned baby-sitters after a distraught mother left her three children — ages 4 and 3 years and 4 months — at the courthouse with orders to "take care of them." The woman had charged her husband with desertion and non-support. The youngsters were taken to the county juvenile home.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336, or dropped off at the newspaper office.