

Financial success
reigns in 1990s, 6D



Baseball
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Buyout plan called morale booster

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A "severance incentive" buyout plan is causing excitement among Farmington school district teachers, despite pink slips sent to 84 members last week and the proposed elimination of 40 to 60 jobs due to program cuts.

Although the teachers' union president called the current financial situation in the district "traumatic to the staff," he said everything possible is being done to retain jobs.

And the Voluntary Severance Incentive Plan should help.

"Morale is good, generally, because of the plan," said Farmington Education Association president Jim Miner. "They're giving some serious thought to it. It's got a lot of people talking."

The FEA and district started working on the severance incentive, or buyout, program in January, when everyone realized cuts were coming because of last summer's state recapture of \$5.8 million from the district. Miner said both the FEA

Teachers talking about it — chief

and district were seeking ways to "keep the young staff, but not force anybody out."

THE PLAN is designed to appeal not only to longtime teachers, but to others who might be considering alternative careers.

The incentive plan will give teach-

ers at the top of the pay scale, with a minimum of 10 years seniority, a onetime buyout of between \$7,000 and \$22,000, depending on how many teacher opt for the plan. School and union officials say the plan will pay for itself as longtime employees at the top of the scale leave, and those at lower levels are retained.

Miner said as of Friday, about 45 teachers were strongly considering the plan.

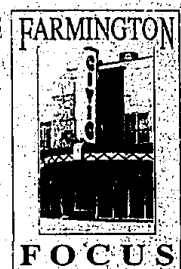
Districts and teachers unions across Southeast Michigan are feeling much of the same impact as

Farmington because of state action to recapture money, and a general anti-tax stance on the part of the electorate. Districts like Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Troy and Rochester are also feeling the pinch, Miner said.

Farmington voters rejected an operating millage increase in February, designed to offset \$5.8 million taken by the state last summer.

"If there's another district that's been hurt worse than Farmington, I

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THE GULF WAR is over, most of the shooting has stopped and the men and women in the U.S. armed forces are coming home to talk about their experiences.

Consider the following items:

LOCAL BOY makes good in Gulf... that's what they're thinking and saying around Farmington's Wood Creek Elementary School.

Michael Bindon, a 2nd Lieutenant in an Army air defense unit, has a Farmington background. He'll talk about his time in Saudi Arabia to teacher Lanny Swanson's fifth grade class at Wood Creek at 9:30 a.m. Monday, April 22.

Bindon, who graduated from North Farmington High School in 1985 and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point four years later, had been corresponding with Swanson's students.

Bindon and his wife Susan, also a North Farmington graduate, live in Ft. Bliss, Texas. They're back in the area for the wedding of his sister, Becky, to Rocky Nili Saturday at the Covenant Baptist Church in West Bloomfield.

"We're just so glad to see him back," said Carol Bahri, mother of Bryan Bahri, a member of Swanson's class. She has a special interest in the war — her husband, Mike Bahri, is from Baghdad — and plans to be at Wood Creek Monday.

MERCY: A DOZEN red roses for Denise Cawley, a senior at that all-girl parochial high school in Farmington Hills.

The flowers came from Army Pfc. Ryan LaFier, just returned from Saudi Arabia and a stint in Operation Desert Storm.

LaFier of New York and Cawley of Farmington Hills were pen-pals, and last week the soldier showed up at Mercy High to say thanks for the letters and support.

"He got on the PA system and expressed his thanks for this," said Jonell Linskey, dean of students at Mercy High. "He said the letters made the effort easier for him to endure."

SPEAKING OF soldier/pen-pals back from the war... another one showed up in Farmington Hills last week.

It was Army Specialist Michael Whitbeck, a member of the 82nd Airborne Division who was corresponding with Ashley Oras, 7, daughter of Richard and Michele Oras of Farmington Hills.

Whitbeck, formerly of Livonia, visited the Oras family and then spoke at Larkshire Elementary, Ashley's school, last Friday.

"It was such a big deal for Ashley to write to him," said Michele Oras, her mother. "As far as she was concerned, he was over there (Saudi Arabia) for her personally. Ashley has pictures of him on our front window... plus lots of yellow ribbons and flags. I think she will continue to write to him. I don't think it will stop here."

Whitbeck and his wife, Jennifer, are stationed in North Carolina. Jennifer's parents are from Farmington Hills.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21896 Farmington road, Farmington 48336, or dropped off at the newspaper office.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

A break in the walking

Rain and chilly weather April 14 didn't stop about 300 participants in the sixth-annual Farmington-area Crop Walk to help the needy. Members from several area churches took part in the 10-kilometer walk. In the photo above, Roger Etzell and his daughter, Sonja; stop for a break at one of the rest points. The walk raised about \$18,000 through pledges, said the Rev. Arthur Spafford of the first United Methodist Church in

Farmington. "Because of the weather, our total may have been down a little, but overall we considered it a very successful walk," he said. Twenty-five percent of the pledges will be given to local charities like Neighborhood House, the Head Start Food Kitchen and Neighborhood House. The remainder goes to Church World Service, a relief agency meeting needs all over the world, according to Spafford.

Think about trash — recycling chief

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Think about this. Every day, 48 million disposable diapers are thrown away. If you stuck them together on the sticky tapes, you could make a chain stretching halfway around the world at the equator.

"We don't think collectively about garbage and what happens to it,"

said Karen Birkholz, Farmington-Farmington Hills recycling coordinator.

That's why Monday, April 22 — Earth Day — is a convenient and appropriate day to kick-off community awareness about garbage, the environment and saving the planet.

In honor of Earth Day, as well as Arbor Day, which is Thursday, April 25, Farmington Hills officials will plant a tree on Orchard Lake Road.

analysis

Farmington officials are sponsoring their 1991 tree planting program.

"Let's start a new tradition this year by looking at ways to save our community and our planet by mak-

ing Earth Day resolutions," said Roberta Boyle, natural resources-public policy agent for the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service of Michigan State University.

IF YOU REMEMBER the dawn of the bottle deposit law, you'll easily recall the anxiety that accompanied the thought of having to save

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Resident wins high art honor

By Loraine McClellan
staff writer

Donna Vogelheim, a Farmington resident with a host of awards for her watercolors, has been given the title of Artist-in-Residence for 1991.

The honor is the highest given by the Farmington Area Arts Commission.

"I love it," said Vogelheim. "It's a great honor. That's it in a nutshell."

Her work is in galleries throughout Michigan, in corporate collections and has been seen nationwide in the most prestigious of watercolor shows. Last year, her work was accepted in four national shows, a very high number.

Being declared Artist-in-Residence came almost simultaneously with the news that she had won yet another award from Michigan Watercolor Society. She will collect that award Friday night, then her Artist-in-Residence award two days later.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Donna Vogelheim, artist-in-residence for 1991, displays one of her watercolor works — "Big Shooter; In November" — at The Farmington Community Center where she has a display.

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State says yes to festival flags

By Casey Hans
staff writer

State transportation officials have given Farmington a reprieve in the ongoing downtown banner problem, allowing the city to install banners promoting the coming Founders Festival which have a sponsor's tagline.

But Jack Morgan, spokesman for the director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, said allowing the festival banners is a one-time situation, and that the agency was still reviewing permanent guidelines involving the use of such decorative banners with sponsors.

"We're going to develop permanent guidelines," he said. "But for this (festival) parade we will allow the banners with a sponsor of up to 3-inch letters."

"So far, the rules have not changed. The law prohibits advertising on the banners."

The festival will run from July 11-13, and the green banners already used in the past are sponsored by the Metrovision cable company.

THE CITY'S Downtown Development Authority appealed in March to newly appointed MDOT director Patrick Novak to allow the local agency to continue to use several sets of sponsored banners in public right-of-way along Grand River, which is a state trunkline.

Several weeks ago, the state prohibited the DDA from using decorative banners with sponsorship tag lines after the DDA had flown them for four years with state and county permission along Grand River and Farmington road, and built up an inventory of such banners with plans to reuse them.

'We're going to develop permanent guidelines. But for this (festival) parade we will allow the banners with a sponsor of up to 3-inch letters.'

— Jack Morgan
state spokesman.

Oakland County officials have not prohibited the use of such banners along Farmington Road. The DDA receives an annual permit from the county for its right-of-way.

In all, there are 22 banners with 13 hanging along Grand River.

Morgan said he hoped the state reprieve would get the city through its festival season without trouble, until the state makes a permanent decision. "We support what they're trying to do," he added.

He wasn't sure when that decision would be made.

CITY MANAGER and DDA member Robert Deadman said he understood the state was considering sponsored banners with 3-inch lettering — what they are allowing for the festival banners — as part of the formal guidelines.

"I got the impression they may consider this as part of the perma-

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