



Jaclyn Nedroscik, 7, of Livonia, assists magician Thomas Plunkard with his magic act.



photos by SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

"Want to pet a chicken?" Thomas Plunkard asks one kid in the audience. Plunkard's magic show and nine other events drew hundreds of people downtown on Wednesday afternoons this summer as part of the DDA's Summer Fun Series.

Sleight of hand

Magician wows crowd in finale of city's Summer Fun series

MAGICIAN THOMAS Plunkard offered a little sleight of hand, some illusion and plenty of fun at his magic show in downtown Farmington last Wednesday.

The event was the finale in a 10-week Summer Fun Series, designed to give area residents something to do on Wednesdays during the summer.

The series was sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority.

Each of the series drew several hundred kids, parents and others to a green-and-white striped tent set up

every week at the corner of Grove Street and Grand River.

Plunkard held two shows, in which he drew children like 9-year-old Brendan Dawson of Farmington Hills and 5-year-old Sara Winston of Farmington into the stage and into the act.

The DDA is an agency of the city of Farmington committed to maintaining a vigorous downtown district while retaining a small community atmosphere. In the past year, the DDA has made a commitment to helping to promote and market the downtown district.



Magician Thomas Plunkard pulls coins out of thin air as part of his act Wednesday.

Business association proposed for Hills' Orchard Lake corridor

By Casey Hens
Staff writer

A Farmington Hills city councilman has proposed forming a business association and possibly beginning a banner program along the city's 2-mile Orchard Lake Road corridor.

"I think we've ignored them, not purposely," said Councilman Ben Marks, speaking about the mix of corporate tenants and small retailers which stretch along the major thoroughfare. "I think they'd like to see some elected attention. The city should take a leadership role."

Marks will put a detailed proposal together for fellow council members to consider in 30 days, he said during an Aug. 12 discussion. Marks has vowed to spend the time necessary to promote the idea and get participation.

City manager William Costick said he supported the idea, and said continuing beautification efforts along Orchard Lake Road between 12 Mile and 14 Mile might be coordinated through such a group. "I think in order to get things off the ground, we need to plant the seeds," he said.

Marks said he had already spoken with several business people, and that they felt it was important to maintain a separate identity for the Orchard Lake corridor, the main commercial corridor running through Farmington Hills and north into West Bloomfield Township. "It's going to take some selling and some hard work," he added. "These people need an infusion of juice."

BUT NOT all council members believe such a group should be endorsed by the city. "I don't think this is a function of the city," Councilwoman Jean Fox told Marks. "You go out and do it. Gosh, maybe it will be wonderful."

She suggested perhaps consideration be given to involving the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce. Councilman Terry Sever said he had no objection to an association, "as long as it doesn't conflict with the chamber." Sever said he wanted to see a structure and a purpose if such a committee is formed.

Chamber of commerce executive director Jody Soronen said she had not yet discussed the proposed asso-

ciation with Marks or businesspeople, but said she has "no objection to working with them and doing what we can."

She said the chamber has made no special efforts to help the Orchard Lake businesses form a group, but that a number of them are chamber members.

Marks also proposed hanging decorative banners along Orchard Lake with recycling information, similar to what has been used in downtown Farmington. He said money from the city's solid waste budget for education purposes could be used. "It's another part of paying attention to Orchard Lake Road," he said.

Other council members said banners, if approved, might need to be changed periodically using other themes, and they wondered how that would be paid for.

Mayer Aldo Vagnozzi said he was concerned about Orchard Lake Road, but also about other businesses in the city.

"I'd like to see us, overall, look at our relationship with the business community," he said, suggesting the city recognize firms for longevity and other items.

Hillside student honored for invention



Charlie Maas, a kindergartner at Hillside Elementary during the past school year, poses with his winning invention.

Hillside Elementary kindergartner Charlie Maas won first place in the nationally sponsored "Invent America" contest.

His invention, "The Traveling Squirt Gun Ammo Pack" won among all kindergartners in Michigan entering the contest. The invention will now be taken to the regional competition, where winners will win a trip to Washington, D.C. for the national competition and a visit with President George Bush.

For the contest, children from all across the country were urged to invent things to make life easier for them. Charlie invented a pack to carry extra water for refilling his squirt gun while playing.

His prize is a \$200 U.S. Savings Bond from the United States Patent Model Foundation. In addition, Hillside school in Farmington Hills will receive an "Invent America" flag for their flagpole, and several other gifts including a Polaroid Instant

In response to criticism that America was losing its technical edge to other developed countries, "Invent America" was started in 1987.

camera and teaching materials.

In response to criticism that America was losing its technical edge to other developed countries, "Invent America" was started in 1987 by then-Vice President Bush to encourage children to create, explore their dreams, and to improve life for themselves and their country.

The U.S. Patent Model Foundation is a non-profit organization supported by grants from corporations including Kmart, Polaroid and Pepsi.

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