

Community Corner

This week's question:

What are you doing to beat the winter blahs?

We asked this question at the Farmington YMCA.



"I don't have winter blahs. I like winter."
— Mandi Skeegan
West Bloomfield



"I keep busy working and I get out of town now and then."
— Patricia Niohaus
Farmington



"I'm a pre-school teacher and we're getting ready for Valentine's Day. That puts a smile on your face."
— Maureen Kornwise
West Bloomfield



"I'm going someplace warm and sunny at Easter, so I'm practicing my golf now at an indoor range."
— Sue Brooks
Lathrup Village



"I'm cooking summer food, barbecuing chicken and fish. And I'm exercising more."
— Susan Hawkins
Berkley



"I like to toboggan on a hill in my backyard. It makes it (winter) more pleasant."
— Sheila Ellis
Southfield

Wingerter resigns DDA board seat

By Casey Hens
staff writer

The first and only president of Farmington's Downtown Development Authority has resigned his seat on that board because of increased personal commitments.

Harry Wingerter, owner of the longstanding card and gift store called the Bon Ton Shoppe, submitted his resignation Jan. 27 effective immediately, saying he had "recently taken on some new responsibilities in my personal life that will progressively consume more of my time."

The city council accepted the resignation Monday night, and appointed Craig Grace, co-owner of the Grace Insurance Agency on Grand River, to replace him on the board.

Wingerter said he chose this time to tender his resignation, because the DDA is preparing to move into a new fiscal year in March when they will elect new officers. DDA vice president Gregory Hobbler has stepped in to chair the board until new officers are chosen.

"Serving on the DDA board has been a very

satisfying experience, and I know that I will miss working with the men and women involved," he said in his resignation letter to Wendy Strip-Sittsamer, the DDA's executive director. "I shall certainly keep my eyes on the future developments around downtown Farmington and I am sure I will have a word to say on occasion."

He also praised Strip-Sittsamer, saying the five-year-old DDA board was fortunate to have her. Grace is excited about the new role he will play on the DDA board, especially in the current economic climate. The Grace business has been in downtown Farmington for 73 years. "I just want to really get involved," he said. "The course has been plotted and now it's a matter of keeping the momentum going."

GRACE IS active in the Downtown Farmington Business Association and is a member of the board of directors for the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Grace follows Wingerter, who was a key player not only in his DDA leadership role, but in his commitment to downtown Farmington in years

prior to the DDA's formation. His business was one of the first to lease space in the Downtown Farmington Center and he was one of several downtown merchants who promoted a downtown rejuvenation project on a Farmington Futures committee — the predecessor to the DDA.

His retail businesses, which include stores in Farmington, Livonia and Brighton, were a second career for Wingerter, after he spent 20 years in two different engineering jobs. He worked for Channels 2 and 4 for 10 years as a broadcast engineer and then at Chrysler Corp. as a product engineer for another 10 years before deciding to strike out on his own with his wife Stella.

Farmington City Manager and DDA board member Robert Deadman said Wingerter will be "sorely missed" adding that "he has been a supporter of the downtown for many years, even before the DDA."

Wingerter said he plans to remain as active as possible in downtown activities and promotions, but will spend more time devoted to his family church which is building a new high school.



Harry Wingerter

Volunteers work for 'Humanity'

Farmington Hills beautification commissioners rolled up their sleeves and went to work for Habitat for Humanity on Jan. 25.

Lincoln Avery, Joan McFarland, Bill Westberg and their families were among a group from Farmington Hills who volunteered to scrape and paint apartments in the Jeffries Project in Detroit.

Habitat for Humanity is a national organization spotlighted by former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalyn. The organization enlists the support of local

groups to help fix up and restore neglected dwellings.

"Many of us respond to needy causes by writing checks," said beautification commissioner chairman Avery. "We don't often get our hands dirty actually doing something. But in these difficult times, contributing time and energy is an alternative action that can be as helpful as contributing money."

If you're interested in helping with Habitat, call the organization at 521-6691.

Hills promotes awards program

Farmington Hills has something other communities want — an annual beautification awards program. At the request of Auburn Hills and South Lyon, members of the Farmington Hills Beautification Commission spoke about the city's successful program where local people and places are recognized for their outstanding display of flowers or landscape design.

"These communities want to know the specifics on how to judge for awards," said commission chairman

Lincoln Avery. "We, as a commission, try to establish guidelines and anyone can work with in the difficult process of judging."

"We also tell other communities of the positive effects of the recognition ceremony. It often results in other places making an effort to

beautify their area. Our list of award winners increases every year."

Avery was accompanied to the other communities to speak by members of the commission's awards committee, awards chairwoman Ellen Abbott, as well as Elaine McKeown and Dan Abbott.

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