

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Crystal clear: Some thieves apparently have crystal clear vision, stealing glass collectibles from gift stores. /2A

Strategy needed: Local political, civic, church and business leaders should organize volunteer efforts to address problems facing our communities, former Gov. George Romney told a Farmington Hills gathering. /3A

Getting together: Farmington High and Eastern Michigan University are playing tag team in the educational ring. /3A

COUNTY NEWS

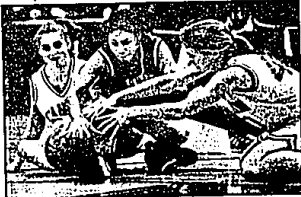
In the swim: There may be a new swimming pool in Oakland County, if the YMCA has its proposal accepted. /5A

OPINION

No surprises?: The school board and those who would be superintendent might like no surprises, but the people will certainly pop a few on us. /20A

Write on! Several readers have written about our Nov. 18 editorial concerning Farmington Harrison's principal Rande Horn. /21A

SPORTS



Basketball biggie: Farmington Hills Mercy played Plymouth Canton in a state Class A regional game Monday evening. Who won? /1B

ENTERTAINMENT

Dance: Make plans to see "The Nutcracker Ballet" /12B

SUBURBAN LIFE

The big two-five: The Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills is celebrating its 25th anniversary. /1C

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Letter terrorizes local couple



A Farmington couple received a frightening communication from their former adopted child. Now police are investigating an apparent extortion attempt.

BY LAIRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A man is in custody in Daytona Beach, Fla., after he tried to extort \$30,000 from his former adoptive family in Farmington, police say.

The family, whose name is being withheld, received a Priority Mail letter Nov. 18 demanding that \$30,000

in unmarked bills be dropped off at the Volusia County Library Center on City Island in Daytona Beach by Nov. 20.

Otherwise, the letter writer threatened, the family's home would be blown up with explosives and a 45-caliber clip of hollowed point rounds would be emptied into "Dad's ass."

The family contacted Farmington police Nov. 18, who worked in cooperation with the FBI on the case. The man, whose name is being withheld pending arraignment, was arrested shortly after 9 a.m. Nov. 20 near the library.

"We took it pretty seriously," said Farmington Public Safety deputy director Michael Wiggins. "Apparently the young man is capable of it."

That was validated when Daytona Beach police found another threatening note intended for the father after the arrest.

According to police, the Farmington family had adopted the suspect when he was 7 months old. The family, which had cared for special-needs children in the past, had the adoption terminated when the child was 12 because of severe emotional problems.

The family has not seen him for nearly 10 years and did not know what he looked like.

A person at the family's residence said the father did not want to comment.

The man was released on parole Nov. 10 after serving only 180 days of

See LETTER, 2A

Farmington Hills honors top firefighter



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hoses and helmets: Denny Hughes is "calm and cool under pressure," according to colleague and partner Don St. Clair.

Burning desire to win sparks top firefighter

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Denny Hughes loves to compete. Although his intensity can sometimes test his family, friends and fellow Farmington Hills firefighters, they'll all admit that it has helped him throughout his career to become one of the most respected firefighters in the city.

Hughes, who was recognized as

Farmington Hills Firefighter of the Year at the department's annual banquet earlier this month, combines an engaging personality with the ability to lead, but make no mistake, he always wants to win.

"My first goal is always to win," he readily admits. "I've been known to tick some people off."

That ambition to be the best works for Hughes as a firefighter,

and complements others in the department, said firefighter Don St. Clair, his partner for the past two years at the Paul Button Station (2).

"He's calm and cool under pressure," St. Clair said. "I have a tendency to be more PR (public relations) oriented. He gets more into the technical end. We work real well

together because we complement each other."

Hughes is proud of his leather firefighter's hat, designating him as the department's top firefighter in 1993. Hughes, who joined the department in 1981 as a paid-on-call volunteer, and then became full time in 1985, received a life-saving

See WIN, 4A

City wants to pay off Mercy purchase ASAP

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

After agonizing over how best to finance the purchase and renovation of the Mercy Center for weeks, the Farmington Hills City Council decided on a 12-year bond schedule.

"We need to watch our level of debt," said councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio. "We would spend \$600,000 (\$645,000 more in interest if we go 15

instead of 12 years."

Although the council had considered a 20-year bond issue to pay for the 67,000-square-foot wing and 27 acres of property at the center on 11 Mile east of Middlebelt, members had reduced their options to 12 or 15 years of financing.

The 15-year option would allow the city to pay off the bond debt at the current low interest rate over a longer

period, giving the city more operating cash.

"It would be a hedge against inflation," said Mayor pro tem Larry Lichtman. "In the next six years, interest rates are likely to go up."

But most council members were more comfortable with paying off the debt sooner.

"Government tends to keep growing," said councilman Terry Sever.

"This way we could lower our debt in case the (next parks and recreation) millage isn't passed again (in 1999). This would be cleaner. Other (parks and recreation) issues would have to stand on their own."

The council's \$4 million bond issue would be paid for through the existing parks and rec millage.

See CENTER, 2A

Some very good kids

Several Farmington-area high school students were among the 250 who were selected to walk in the second-annual Parade Honor Corps during the Michigan Thanksgiving Parade Thursday.

They are: Amy Tobe and Matthew Zimmerer, from Farmington Harrison High School; Kevin Aflerbaugh and Laura McWilliam, from Farmington High School; and Yvonne Bankowski and Jennifer Werner, from Mercy High School.

The 1993 Parade Honor Corps featured students from 86 high schools in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. Area public and private high school principals were asked to nominate outstanding students to wave their school pennants during the parade.

Students in this year's "human float," as it has been described, also carried banners from all 86 participating schools. They were provided with

FARMINGTON FOCUS

jackets bearing a "Wave of the Future" logo — this year's Honor Corps theme.

"These students represent the best and brightest from Greater Detroit — young people selected to march in the parade based on their attendance and their grades," said Kirk Hendrix, Michigan Thanksgiving Parade president.

For the second straight year, the Honor Corps project was organized by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan.

Your vote counts

My Vote Counts, a cable TV series focusing on voting for all residents, can be seen the first and third Wednesdays of

each month at 8 p.m., Thursdays at 2 p.m. and Fridays at viewer request (653-7303) on cable Channel 12.

November's show features a discussion of public school financing with guest state Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, and state Sen. Jack Paxson, D-Farmington Hills. The host is Shelley Parsons of the local League of Women Voters.

In December, an interview with newly elected Farmington Hills City Council members will be shown. Host will be Larry Irey.

Opinions and reactions to the shows are encouraged. Call Julieann Howaneston, chairwoman of the Television Sub-Committee of the Committee to Increase Voter Participation, at 474-3770.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21899 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336, dropped off at the newspaper office or faxed to 477-9722.