



# Farmington Observer

IN THE PAPER

## TODAY

**Blaze battled:** There were no injuries, but four families were displaced by an early Friday morning fire at a Farmington Hills apartment complex. /2A

**Dumpster deals:** A Farmington Hills policy aimed at beautifying the city by screening Dumpsters is either impractical or hasn't been enforced enough, depending on who you talk to. /3A

### OPINION

**Sweet memories:** Mention Sanders and visions of more than just sugar plums come to mind. Managing editor Judith Doner Berne found out why on today's Points of view page. /10A

### TASTE



**Paczki Day:** You don't have to be Polish to love paczki. They're not just an ordinary doughnut. /1B

**Super Supper:** Lucy Mitchell grew up in a restaurant family. Her low-fat supper suggestions are super. /1B

### MALLS & MAINSTREETS

**Mall love:** Cupid's arrows pierced the hearts of two Meadowbrook Village Mall employees who plan an October wedding in center court. /5B

**Breakfast Buddy:** Lakeside's new play-area for kids, cries, "Honey, I Shrunk the Bacon." /5B

### SPORTS

**Gold medalist:** Steve Kemp, a former Farmington resident, rebounded from setbacks and eventually became a decathlon champion. /1C

**Gymnastics:** North Farmington and Farmington had their highest scores of the season last week, but the Raiders won the dual meet. /1C

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## Man: Mexico maligned



A Farmington Hills businessman says fears about the safety of business people traveling in Mexico are unfounded.

BY BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Stereotypes about Mexico are really bad business.

That's a lesson American business people and tourists should learn from the recent tragedy involving Farmington Hills businessman Brian McCarthy,

who was killed near Queretaro, Mexico, last week.

"I just came from Queretaro last night (Thursday)," said Lee Davis, managing director of Tremec Trading Co. in Farmington Hills. "I've been going there, on average, about once a month for 10 years. I've traveled all

over Mexico and never felt that I wasn't safe."

Davis' opinion is supported by the fact that about 7 million American tourists visit our southern neighbor with few problems.

"It's (the area by the freeway near Queretaro where McCarthy's body was found) very busy," said Carlos Cuadrelli, Mexican consul in Detroit. "It's a freeway with trucks, people, police. And it's a toll road, so there is a lot of security, and people are watching."

See MEXICO, 3A



Lee Davis



Changing places: Stuart Jones, a fifth-grader at Eagle Elementary in the Farmington school district, finds out what it's like in a wheelchair.

## Kids share struggles of disabled

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

For one day, Eagle Elementary students had to learn to move without walking, speak without talking and handle what they cannot easily grasp.

Changing Places, a program devised by Eagle special education staff, is not so much an obstacle course as it is a path to understanding.

Exercises are designed so children learn that dealing with special education students calls for empathy instead of sympathy.

Students are led through five stations, depicting obstacles people with disabilities contend with every day.

Afterward, groups pair off to discuss their experiences. The program Feb. 3 was the second one in three years at Eagle.

"I feel it's a wonderful thing," said special education teacher Nancy Gorga, who helps organize the program. "It's important for kids to understand each other."

Eagle Elementary hosts 30 special education kids, who are known as POH students, an acronym for being physically or otherwise health impaired.

The elementary program is one of several operating in the Farmington Public School District, which draws special needs kids from the southwest part of the county. Oakland (Intermediate) Schools provides funding.

In many instances, special ed students share classrooms with general ed pupils, Gorga said. Mainstreaming, as it is called, involves more than learning the same subject.

"They might be frightened by seeing someone with different physical handicaps and may not understand they are like their regular education peers," said Gorga, whose husband Bob Gorga also teaches at Eagle. "They just have a way of doing different things."

See STRUGGLES, 4A

## Council: Saving tax money or spending time?

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

### ANALYSIS

Those cha-chings you hear are nickel-and-dime items that often clutter the Farmington City Council agendas these Mondays.

Some contend such peripheral issues bog down the process. Others say they're part and parcel of open government.

Farmington is not immune to this trivial pursuit. The latest round in-

volves placing a new city seal in council chambers.

On Feb. 7, members debated at length whether to have an artist's rendering done in considering a bid for the crest that would be displayed behind council.

Councilwoman Joanne McShane voted no, saying such a request commits the city to follow through on get-

ting the seal, which is projected to cost anywhere from \$335 to \$1,662.

Others backed the plan. Councilman William Hartsock noted the drawing merely allows others to see what the seal would look like and doesn't tie the city to anything.

Small-town politics, you say. That's the rub.

Larger financial issues loom beyond the bowl of minnows council puts out for public viewing.

An update on contract negotiations

with the Farmington Public Safety officers union has not been provided to the public. Instead, those are given to the council in closed executive sessions, as allowed by the Open Meetings Act.

Then there's the March 15 ballot proposal, which, no matter how things fall, will affect the city's financial future. Council has not taken a

See COUNCIL, 4A

### FFIA needs volunteers

A local anti-drug group — Farmington Families in Action — is sending out a call for volunteers to help spread the word about "healthy bodies and healthy habits," said a group spokeswoman.

"For 10 years, our volunteers have worked with preschool, elementary, middle and high school students," said Nancy Smith. "They present ways to avoid peer pressure, to help them say no and still keep their friends."

FFIA needs volunteers to help with publicity, fund-raising, newsletters, phone calls and mailings, Smith said.

"Even if you are available only on an occasional basis, please call Betty Nicolay (861-8665) or Nancy Krueger (553-0611) for more information," Smith said.

### FARMINGTON FOCUS

Interested people should attend FFIA meetings at 9:15 a.m. the first Thursday of each month in Room 108 of the Farmington Training center on Thomas Street in downtown Farmington.

People of all ages are welcome, including parents, relatives and singles, Smith said. "The only requirement is a common desire to encourage healthy lifestyles in our community."

### Any 'diamonds' out there?

The Farmington Area Commission on Aging is accepting nominations for its second annual Diamond of the Community Award to be presented to an outstanding senior citizen who

is at least 75 years of age.

The commission will accept nominations — including self-nominations — postmarked no later than March 19. All Farmington-area residents and community organizations are welcome to submit names.

Nominees should be contributing actively to the community for paid or volunteer work for any Farmington or Farmington Hills business or organization. A one-page written description of the nominee's qualifications should be mailed to the Farmington Area Commission on Aging, 33735 Cadillac, Farmington Hills 48335.

Contact telephone numbers for everyone concerned must be included. A cash award of \$75 and a plaque will be presented to the winner as part of the Marcy Center Volunteer Recognition ceremony during National Volunteer Recognition Week, usually the third week of April.