

THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1994



SUSAN MCKENDRICK

Ice rinks have solid purpose

In the fall of 1991, with my 40th birthday soon approaching, I decided I needed to do something about regular exercise. But I'm like a lot of other people (come on, admit it!) who hate the boredom of the Stairmaster, the track, or jumping around in a room to fast music. I don't know what made me think of it, but somehow the idea of putting on figure skates and skating around a sheet of ice appealed to me. Maybe because I had always loved watching Peggy Fleming, and had the notion that not only could I get some exercise, but I could become graceful and coordinated as well.

I quickly discovered that this was more easily said than done. There is nothing available in Farmington Hills, and the only arena that had an adult class conducive to my work schedule was Livonia, in which I enrolled for \$60 percent more cost than their residents.

I have gradually progressed to taking private lessons from a professional coach and have competed both solo and with an adult precision team.

My 12-year-old son, who became interested watching me, now spends several hours a week in private lessons and practice. However, for us to pursue this, we now skate primarily at arenas in Westland and Livonia. We seem to spend as much time on the road getting to these arenas as we do on the ice.

Therefore, when I was asked more than a year ago to become a member of the Farmington Hills Ice Arena Committee, I was extremely enthusiastic. Farmington Hills, which is a large and ever-growing major suburb, would finally be able to provide a service which has been taken for granted for many years in other areas.

The committee worked diligently and conscientiously to determine the need, the anticipated revenue and expenses, estimated construction costs and financial approaches. The final report included a mission statement, management concepts and the benefits to the city itself.

Along with the help of an expert, Jack Vivian, from the University of Michigan Sports Facilities Research Laboratory, we were able to determine the need did exist, as well as the ability, for this arena could be built with no additional taxes to the citizens, and with the likelihood of it becoming revenue positive.

There are many obvious benefits to skating, whether it is hockey, figure skating, speed skating, or just-for-fun skating.

The first is the exercise or health benefit. Another is that it is a family sport in which everyone at almost any age can participate, all the way from about 3-year-olds up to an including senior citizens. The school system could become involved through hockey associations or group lessons and Parks and Rec could have another great program to add to their already excellent list.

Skating is also a sport, like many others, that encourages positive ways to set goals, learn self-discipline and time organization, practice good sportsmanship, and understand team comradery. I would much rather our children learned the art of healthy competition within the walls of the ice arena than out on the street where violence is ever increasing.

There are a few people who may ask why we should have an ice arena which would serve only those who skate. Well, we provide numerous programs in this city, all of which are used by only a portion of the community. There is no activity, including even walking in our now available parks, that is shared or enjoyed by everyone. But we continue to provide a wide range of programs, as many as possible, to meet the variety of needs of the community. The arena would considerably enhance our current programs.

Our final report has now been presented to the city council. They will be studying this carefully and asking many questions. I would like to ask the citizens of Farmington Hills to also take some time in the evaluation of this proposal.

The committee meetings have been, and will continue to be, open to the public. Please attend if you are interested. The report, as well as the background information, can be studied. If you have questions, please ask us. If you have opinions, please let us know. There will be public hearings, and we encourage you to attend.

I honestly believe that once you have all the factual information, you will be as enthusiastic about this project as the committee members are, and will recognize the immense benefit to the city of Farmington Hills.

Susan McKendrick, a Farmington Hills resident and legal nurse consultant, is involved in Farmington School District committees and is president of Normandy Hills Homeowners Association.

Hoping for a cure

Girl's diabetes challenges Hills family



Measuring health: Franca Gardner measures an injection of insulin for Alexandra, 2.

■ A Farmington Hills couple, who have a toddler with juvenile diabetes, hope to form a support group with other families dealing with the complicated disease.

BY DIANE GALE
STAFF WRITER



Alexandra Gardner, 2, wears a beautiful 18-karat gold bracelet and it could save her life.

The fancy MedicAlert chain indicates Allie is diabetic and insulin dependent.

It is also a reminder of the day her parents, Franca and Glen, will never forget. On June 4, 1993, their youngest child was diagnosed with diabetes. Franca noticed Alexandra was urinating frequently, constantly thirsty and irritable, all signs of diabetes.

"I took her to the doctor and said something's not right. They did a urine test and sure enough," Franca said wrinkling her nose.

Sneaky disease

They immediately took Alexandra to the hospital and for the next five days learned about the disease known for its invasive attacks on the kidneys, eyes and arteries. Diabetes oftentimes is not detected until damage has been done. Allie takes two insulin shots daily, before breakfast and before dinner. And her finger is pricked to extract blood, sometimes as many as five times daily, to check her sugar level.

Franca describes the difficulty of the daily rituals by pointing out how hard it is to get a 2-year-old to cooperate with simple tasks, let alone face needles and pain.

"Everyday is a struggle," Franca said. "She still cries (when she gets her insulin injections.) It's all diet, exercise and insulin. She has to eat every three or four hours. Viruses, colds, fever and any kind of infection will affect her blood sugar."

The dark-haired, pixie-faced, talkative toddler has a lot of mood swings. Sometimes it's part of "the terrible twos" and sometimes she is having sugar reactions.

Family affair

Alexandra's diabetes is a "family diagnosis," Franca said explaining that she can't give her other two children, Jacob, 7 and Gabrielle, 4, candy and deny Alexandra the same treat. Meals are at the same time daily and most activities, like sleep-over parties and Halloween, have to be evaluated before Alexandra can participate.

"We got rid of everything sweet in the cupboards," Glen said, adding that he worries how Alexandra will deal with junk food as a teenager.

"Like a lot of families we went through the various stages of grief," Franca said. "I was very angry about it. It shouldn't happen to a child. After she got stabilized, we thought we needed to find a support group."

Shortly after the diagnosis they were introduced to Margo Salyer, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation director, who lives one subdivision away from their Farmington Hills home. Glen said they spent the first nine months after the diagnosis in denial before they realized

See DIABETES, 3C

WANTED: CURE FOR DIABETES

Mark your calendar for upcoming Juvenile Diabetes Foundation fund-raisers:

- 1920s Roar at the Ritz 8 p.m. Friday, April 15, at the Ritz Carlton in Dearborn. Tickets are \$75 each and benefit tickets, with reserved seating, are \$150 per person. The evening will include dinner, dancing to the music of the Simone Vitale Band, "a little friendly back-room gambling," a silent auction and more.
- Golf tournament Friday, May 13, at Links at Pinewood in Walled Lake includes lunch, golf, dinner and awards.
- Walk for the Cure Sunday, Sept. 18, is the biggest JDF fund-raiser of the year. Walkers solicit pledges for each mile they log at a trail near the GM Tech Center in Warren.
- Franca Gardner of Farmington Hills and a friend, who has an 8-year-old diabetic son, are planning a fundraiser for JDF at Hillside Elementary School in Farmington Hills. The details, however, haven't been finalized.

Money raised during these events will go to research where significant progress has already been made in the following areas:

- Transplanting insulin-producing cells in human subjects.
- Understanding how the body's own immune system destroys insulin-producing cells in people with diabetes.
- Locating a genetic factor that may cause a person to be more susceptible to developing diabetes.
- Establishing how viruses may work as a "trigger" mechanism in causing diabetes.
- Improving laser techniques to treat diabetes' eye problems.
- Development of insulin pumps to replace daily shots of insulin.
- Development of techniques for self-monitoring of blood glucose for improved well-being of people with diabetes.

Source: Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

Sleuths sought to solve vexing mystery

Farmington police Detective Imma Buffono scratched her scalp, dragged on her cigarette and took a gulp of coffee in one fell swoop of her hand.

"Tell me, when did you see him last?" she asked the lanky woman standing in front of her. "Well, it had to be about 3 p.m. Thursday," Jane Fink said, staring at the ground. "I just finished reading my Farmington Observer when the doorbell rang. He stopped by to pick up the last pages of the mystery novel we were writing together. He promised he'd call me later that night.

"But, the phone never rang," Fink continued. Tell us how this mystery should end. The author who writes the best finish will see his or her work published in your Farmington Observer Suburban Life section on March 24.

We're looking for the funniest, most novel approach to this spoof set in the Farmington area. The winner will receive a gift certificate from Cadillac Cafe on Grand River between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt roads. A copy of, "Pronto," written by Elmore Leonard, a mystery novelist

from Birmingham, also will be awarded just in case the dinner conversation lags. Entries should be between 800 and 1,000 words and must be submitted to The Farmington Observer office, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336 south of Nine Mile, or by FAX: 477-9723, by March 18.

Submissions by Suburban Communications employees and their families will not be considered. A committee of Observer & Eccentric reporters and editors will judge the entries.