

New beat



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

On patrol: Scott Dawson is the newest member of the Farmington Public Safety Department. Dawson joins the department as a public safety officer having previously served as a police officer in Williamston, Mich. He's a graduate of the Mid-Michigan Police Academy, has a bachelor's degree in pre-law from Michigan State and an associate's degree in criminal justice from Lansing Community College.

Woman testifies in sex assault case

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

A 17-year-old testified that a "trusted" friend of her mother offered to take her out to something to eat, not her drunk and then forced her to have sex.

The attorney for a Farmington Hills man accused of sexually assaulting the woman tried unsuccessfully to have 47th District Court Judge Fred Hiza throw out the charge on the grounds that a 17-year-old woman consented.

Harris, after a one-hour recess during the preliminary examination of Christian Anthony Thompson, ruled there was enough evidence to bind the case over to Oakland County Circuit Court. No date has been set.

Ron Plunkett, Thompson's Brighton attorney, asked the woman, also of Farmington Hills, if she had voluntarily had drinks before leaving her house with Thompson on the afternoon of March 31.



Christian Thompson

The woman said that while her mother, who was sick, had taken a nap, she had a drink with Thompson, a trusted friend of her mother who had been a regular house guest for about six months.

"Yes, I trusted him," she said.

She testified that Thompson had asked if she wanted to go out for something to eat, but instead stopped at a liquor store and bought rum, which he offered to her as they drove around.

She testified that Thompson later took her to a bowling alley where they played pool until about 9 p.m. At that point, she told him she wanted to go home.

"I was messed up," she said, adding that at that point she wasn't having a good time and that Thompson agreed to take her home. But he told her he wanted "to pick something up" at his place, she said.

She then testified that Thompson asked her to have sex. She said no, telling him that she was only 17 and was afraid of becoming pregnant. But then he grabbed her and began kissing her, she said.

"Then he forced himself on me," she said, forcing her to have intercourse after pulling off her jeans and underwear.

Assistant Oakland County prosecutor Thad Morgan asked her to refer to the statement she gave police about the alleged incident to refresh her memory. Plunkett asked that the statement be allowed as evidence, which it was.

The woman said she was intoxicated at the time of the incident, but knew what was going on and said no "three to four times."

"I can't believe he did this to me," she testified. "I'm only 17."

Plunkett said that since his client had never threatened the woman and that since after the incident he took her home and even went into her house and visited her mother who had woken up, there was no force and the woman had consented.

Thompson, charged with third degree criminal sexual conduct, a 15-year felony, and furnishing alcohol to a minor, remains free on bond with the provision that he have no contact with the woman or her family.

1 teen acquitted, 1 faces trial in death

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

One teen has been found innocent and another will be tried Monday for negligent homicide in the traffic death of a 16-year-old last year.

Bridget Ann Fleet, 17, of Farmington, was acquitted in Oakland County Probate Court March 23 of charges that her actions while driving caused the death of James John Sawulski, who was 16 when he died May 25, 1993.

Jason Scott Borin, 17, a passenger in the car, will now be charged.

Fleet had been driving a 1984 Oldsmobile north on Hunt Club south of 11 Mile and just east of Halsted at about 9 p.m. on May 24 when the accident took place. Sawulski and Kenneth Andrew Johnson, 17, were riding on the trunk of the car at the time, while Fleet drove and Borin of Farmington Hills sat in the passenger seat.

Farmington Hills police Sgt. Ray Cranston said the four teens had been trading places, driving and sitting on the rear of the car. Police had been dispatched when someone reported the activity. While the police were on the way, the car moved to the side of the road suddenly and the two teens fell off the trunk.

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Both suffered closed-head injuries. Sawulski was taken to Providence Hospital in Southfield, where he died the next morning.

Johnson was taken to Botsford General Hospital, where he was treated and released.

Fleet had originally testified that she had turned the car, which was not traveling at an excessive speed, to avoid an oncoming white Jeep when the accident took place.

Prosecutors are now accusing Borin of grabbing the wheel while in the passenger seat and pulling the car to the right suddenly. Several witnesses told police that a white Jeep did arrive at the scene, but not until after the accident.



James John Sawulski

Borin will appear before Judge Eugene Moore in Probate Court where he will be tried as a juvenile.

Democrats honor Vagnozzi for 'civic-minded spirit'

Some 200 friends, elected officials and candidates for Michigan governor and U.S. senator packed the historic Botsford Inn on Saturday to honor Farmington Hills City Council member Aldo Vagnozzi for nearly five decades of service to his community.

Keynote speaker U.S. Sen. Carl Levin told the overflow crowd at the first Roosevelt Dinner for the 11th Congressional District Democratic Party that Vagnozzi exemplified "the civic-minded spirit of the Democratic Party."

Vicki Barnett, 11th District chairwoman and statewide education activist, praised Vagnozzi as a politician "who always found the time to help residents."

Vagnozzi, a longtime Democrat in a community known for its Republican sentiment, serves on the nonpartisan Farmington Hills City Council. State Sen. Jack Paxson, D-Farmington Hills, presented Vagnozzi with a bipartisan resolution of tribute from the Michigan Senate.

Vagnozzi, a 68-year-old publishing consultant, has held almost every position from precinct delegate to mayor of Farmington Hills. He's now in his third term on the city council.

"The Farmington Hills City Council, by a vote of one to six, welcomes you to the city," he joked.

"I was pleased. Having Carl Levin come in and say such nice things about me is heartwarming. I think he's one of the most decent senators there," Vagnozzi said after the dinner.

Lately the Democratic Party has regained some vigor on the state level, Vagnozzi said.

"Quite a bit of it I think has to



Aldo Vagnozzi

do with what happened in Lansing a couple of weeks ago... I'm talking about that bill they passed restricting collective bargaining, and the removal of bingo from political groups," he said.

"Somehow it has rejuvenated the party."

The Botsford Inn reception also was a gathering point on the Democratic campaign trail.

The four democratic candidates for governor — former Congressman Howard Wolpe, State Sen. Debbie Stabenow, State Rep. Lynn Jondahl and former East Lansing Mayor Larry Owen — were in attendance.

State Sen. Lana Pollack, former Congressman William Brodeur, Macomb County Prosecutor Carl Marling, Michigan State University Trustee Joel Ferguson and

representatives of Congressman Bob Carr, the leading Democratic candidates for U.S. Senate, also shook hands and enlisted supporters.

Levin predicted that 1994 would be "a very good year for Michigan Democrats." He cited the "outstanding" achievements of the first year of the Clinton presidency, especially the passage of a true deficit reduction budget, which has stimulated a strong economic recovery, and the unprecedented creation of 2 million new jobs.

Levin also praised last year's strong crime legislation, which included the Brady bill and a ban on assault rifles. He also praised the Family and Medical Leave Act.

"There is no reason to believe that we can't elect a Democrat from this congressional district if we work at it," Levin said.

"The extreme view of this area's representatives in Lansing and Washington are completely out of synch with the area's largely moderate electorate," district chair Barnett said.

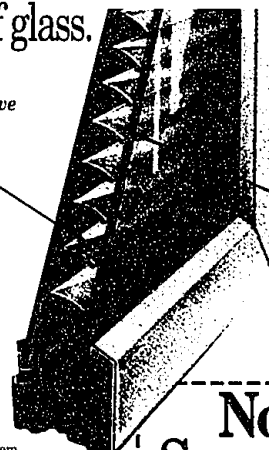
"Joe Knollenberg voted for assault rifles and against bipartisan reform of lobbyist activities and campaign finance. (Sen. David Honigman and (Rep.) (Jan) Dolan and (Barbara) Dobb recklessly voted to eliminate school funds without any replacement plan."

"They later supported a funding scheme which sends even more of our hard-earned tax dollars to support schools, towns, and cities in other areas, at our expense. It's time to send our representatives a message that they serve us, not the other way around."

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- Taylor 22119 Eureka Road.....287-4220
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Night to help kids play it safe

A first-ever Safe Kids Night will highlight National Safe Kids Week, May 8-14. The event will take place 6:00-9:30 p.m. Friday, May 13, at the Mercy Center, on 11 Mile east of Middlebelt in Farmington Hills.

The purpose of the program is to introduce families to the area agencies involved in providing

products and programs that emphasize safety for youngsters. Lifesaving topics will be presented in an entertaining format.

People can learn safety tips regarding fire, pool, electrical and bicycle safety as well as disaster preparedness and poison control. Herbie the Fire Hydrant and the Farmington Hills Fire Depart-

ment clown troupe will be on hand.

Team Farmington Special Olympians will provide food and drink. Activities are planned for children in preschool through high school.

For information, call Lt. Michael Carr of the Farmington Hills Fire Department at 476-0107 or 653-0744.