Nomination forms available for local Athena Award

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and Bob Sake Oldamobile will cosponsor the Athena Award in the Farmington area. Nominations are being accepted for the Athena Award, which will be presented in May to an individual who has achieved excellence in his/her business or profession, and has served the omnunity in a meaningful way. "The Athena Award provides something we don't often find—a win-win-win situation," said the

chamber's Nurien Ural. "It's wonderful for the recipient, Bob Seks Oldamobile and the chamber. National recognition for our very special people is an important achievement."

The Athena Award, created for the Chamber of Commerce in Lansing in 1982, has expanded to more than 300 US. cities. It is presented in the form of a handpoured bronze sculpture symbolizing the strength, courage and wisdom of the recipient.

The Farmington-area recipient

will be invited to join the 1,600 others nationally and the two Farmington winners, as a member of the Athens National Society to promote leadership opportunities. Previous winners in Farmington are Linda Miynarsk of Botaford Continuing Care Center and Beverly Papal of the Farmington Community Library.

The Oldsmobile Division of General Motors has underwritten the Athena Award program since 1985 and is in large measure responsible for the national expan-

aion of the program. In 1933, the .

First of America Bank Corporation became the Athena Award Program's second national underwriter, helping to spread the program further.

Nominations are judged on the attaining their full potential. Nomination forms may be obtained from the chamber at 35000 for them as it. Suita 101, Farming-the community in a meaningful way, and assistance to women in

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Trial court costs: \$371 million

By The RICLIAND
STATE WATERS

"It would cost the state budget
\$371 million to pay for full funding of all trial courts, the Michlgan Association of Counties says.

"That's only I percent of the
state's total budget," said Betty
Witt, Mecosta County commissloner and MAC chaiswoman.

MAC made its case March I for
full state funding before a joint
Senste-House panel in Lansing
investigating court funding.

MAC executive director Tim
McGuire vowed "to fight until all
counties get courts subsidiaed."

Outstate counties are suing the
state to enforce a 1980 law in
which the Legislature funded Detroit Recorder's and district
Court with a promise to fund the
other 82 counties' courts by 1983.
The promise never was kept. The
Michigan Supreme Court is
scheduled to hear oral arguments
March 9.

Sen. William VanRegenmorter.

March 9.

Sen. William VanReenmorter,
R-Jenison, co-chairman of the
panel, said the special joint committee, scheduled to 'go out of
business at the end of March, will
be able to recommend only further study by the Senate and
House Judiciary committees.

Part of the solution, MAC's
Witt said, will be to cut the ere
cost of court operations by consolidating some courts and raising
revenue.

idating some courts and raising revenue.
Gov. John Engler has vowed to who the saddition of any trial judges (circuit, recorder's, probate and district) until a more efficient system is designed. So far, however, the governor hasn't backed any reform plan. His 1996 proposed budget calls for only a 1 percent increase in court funding.

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The chief "reform" plan dis-cussed in Lansing was proposed by a committee of the Michigan Bar Association — consolidating all four types of courts into a single "trial court." But the Bar's Representative Assembly refused to endorse that specific plan.

A Wayne County official backed MAC's proposal for full state funding of courts. Patricia McKinnon, budget director, said her county would be helped, too. her county would be helped, too. There is a perception that Wayne County is getting preferential treatment in financing of the trial courts. The truth is that Weyne County still spends around \$100 million a year on the trial court system," she said in prepared re-

MAC hired the firm of David M. Griffith & Associates of Lansing to calculate the total cost of courts — a job complicated by the fact that costs are "buried in different parts of budgets," said DMG spokesman Jim Olson. For example: A law library is part of court operations but may not be shown in the court budget; courtroom balliffs may be carried in the sheriff a budget; counsel for indigents may be shown in the court clerks may be shown in the county clerk's budget.

or 27.6 percent.

Detroit \$18.9 million, or 5 per-

cent. Oakland County \$39.5 million, or 16.5 percent.

E Piye "core" counties \$37.5 million, or 5 percent.

"Are you telling us that Detroit and Wayne County are one-third of the total costs of state trial courts?" asked Sen. Glenn Stell, R-Grand Rapids.

"Yes," said Olson.

MAC's numbers differed from
those offered late last year by
then-Chief Justice Michael
court. Cavenagh put the total
cost at \$510 million, but that figure was a gross cost that included
filling fees and fines — revenues
generated by the courts themselves.

Cavanagh's numbers put the net cost of couris at \$350 million for 1991, fairly close to MAC's \$371 million estimate for 1993. Cavanagh said the high court will offer its funding plan in May.

The debate over state funding of courts is complicated by the fact that many district couris generate enough local revenue — for example, with ordinance fines — to cover their operations, and a few even make an operating profit.

Olson gave this breakdown of trial court operating costs by local units of government:

Wayne County \$103.5 million,













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