

Man faces charge in home invasion

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A Detroit man, 34, has been charged in the home invasion of an 87-year-old man's Farmington Place apartment.

Leslie Donald Wright was arraigned before 47th District Court Magistrate James Brady on a first-degree home invasion charge Saturday. Cash bond was set at \$2,500.

Farmington police arrested Wright at a Detroit residence Friday after following leads in the case.

On Sept. 29, a man wearing a bandanna entered a ground-floor apartment through a window and asked the resident for money. He removed \$20 from the resident's wallet and took a recently purchased 18-inch television.

The resident was unhurt in the incident.

The victim said the man's voice was similar to a maintenance man who worked around Farmington Place. Police tracked down a Detroit address through Uniformed Temporary Service for a maintenance man, who hadn't turned up for work Sept. 28.

Police were talking with the man's mother when he called. Police cross referenced the number on caller I.D., which was for a house across the street.

In a separate incident Sept. 27, an intruder kicked in the door of an occupied house on Vicary Land in Farmington. Victims, who were sleeping at the time, never saw the perpetrator.

"We don't think they are related," Farmington Public Safety Commander Chuck Lee said, "but we're going to look at it."



The ice is nice: Farmington Hills residents Ellen Reith (left) and her 6-year-old daughter Allison skate with friend Kelly Burgess and her mom, Becky, at the new arena.

13-year-old sparks chase

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A joy ride involving a 13-year-old driver came to an abrupt halt Sept. 30 when the car he was driving struck a sign on eastbound Grand River Avenue after a high-speed police chase.

Farmington police have petitioned Oakland County Probation Court to charge the Farmington Hills teen on various infractions, including driving without a license and fleeing and eluding.

The driver and passenger, a 14-year-old Hills girl, were unhurt in the crash. Farmington police estimated the 1990 Chevy Lumina reached speeds of 70 mph on Grand River.

Police terminated the chase before the crash occurred near M-5

and Grand River median at 1:38 a.m. The Lumina had extensive damage.

"It was grandpa's car," Farmington Public Safety Deputy Director Michael Wiggins said. "He's quite upset."

"Fortunately, they weren't hurt. It could have been much worse," Police spotted the car traveling north on Farmington Road. The car was going 41 mph in a 25-mph zone and swerving.

When police tried to stop the car, the driver accelerated rapidly and turned on eastbound Grand River. The car proceeded to run red lights at Power and Orchard Lake roads.

The boy took the car while his grandfather was sleeping, police reports said.

Manager: Teams to include more residents over time

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills Ice Arena is off and running, and after a lot of wrangling over schedules, most of those skating are happy with the chance.

A few residents had criticized the fact that not all of the hockey travel teams have more than 50 percent Farmington Hills residents.

Arena Manager Jerry Nelson said that is typical, because it is difficult to form completely new teams in one year.

"In St. Clair Shores (where he formerly managed an ice arena) we tried to keep it all residents," he said. "But after the first couple of years we had to give that up to attract teams and coaches. It's an evolution where eventually you will have mostly residents."

Nelson said every Farmington Hills youth who has tried out for hockey will play.

"Residents get first priority as far as playing," he said. "But the (Farmington Hills) hockey association conducts tryouts for the travel teams. Those teams are very competitive."

Greg Switaj, chairman of the newly formed Farmington Hills Hockey Association, said good coaches want to be competitive, and to do that, they want to play the best players available.

"We're learning as we're going along here," he said. "The travel teams are you elite players, who give a high profile to your program."

Switaj, who played college hockey for Notre Dame, said several border-line players who were residents received preference in an effort to follow the 50 percent guideline. But coaches were given waivers if they could not meet that requirement.

"Some parents get involved with their egos rather than what's

good for their kid," he said. "They think that their kid should be on the travel team. But if he isn't as good as the other players, he'll ride the bench and won't develop."

"In the long run, a kid who gets to play is going to have more fun," he said. "And he can develop to become a better hockey player."

Switaj said once a program becomes established, the residency rule is easier to fulfill.

"Livonia has gotten to the point where they have 75 percent

residents in their program," he said.

Good players will want to stay with good coaches, wherever they go.

"In order to have good coaches, you've got to allow them some flexibility," he said.

"Even the elite players, for the most part, will never play professional hockey," Switaj said. "The object is to let them play at some level and have fun. Why push it at this age?"

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"I like to skate pairs," he said. "Skating solo can be nerve wracking."

It was also a happy day for a lot of staff who are beginning what they hope will be a long tenure at the arena.

"I've been teaching figure skating for 20 years," said Lisa Macerantini of Garden City. "I've coached travel teams before. We'll be taking some skaters to Alabama Nov. 4 and I'm looking forward to it."

Macerantini said she has been surprised with the strong turnout for the learn-to-skate programs.

"That's important because it's what feeds our other programs," she said.

Hills resident Rob Kay said the arena meant a lot to his family.

"I play hockey, my son plays hockey and my daughter figure skates," he said. "We used to go to Southfield. This is going to be much better."

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