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IN THE PAPER
TODAY

Here comes Santal: Saturday's a big day for downtown Farmington. Jolly Old St. Nick arrives in a helicopter to kick off the third-annual Holiday Hunting. /3A
Speaking of language: Farmington Public Schools is trying to take the "bye" out of bilingualism. /4A

Improvements coming: Farmington Hills officials are wasting no time planning for the improvements for the police and fire departments thanks to the passage of a public safety tax. /2A

OPINION

Season's spirit: The monster malls may be filled with Christmas shoppers, but the holiday spirit shines in little old Farmington, too. /10A

COMMUNITY LIFE

Giving a hoot: An 'OWL' is anyone who is interested in the welfare of mid-life and older women, says Doris Austerberry, a Farmington Hills resident and this week's guest columnist. /13A

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Holiday concerts: Spend a "Silent Night" enjoying music presented by local choirs and orchestras. You'll soon be whistling "Jingle Bells." /1B

SPORTS

Hoop season: Coach Brian Swinehart is preparing his North Farmington boys basketball team for the upcoming season. /1C

Soccer stars: The best players of 1995 are on the All-Observer boys soccer team. /4C

AT HOME

Welcome homes: Greet the season in a special way with Snowprints VI, a suburban winter house tour hosted by high school PTSA. /Section D

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Case confounds Japanese media



Japanese TV would like to provide more coverage of a Japanese woman charged with murder here in the death her infant son. However, a gag order has the media frustrated.

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The case involving a Japanese woman accused of killing her infant son in Farmington Hills has people in her homeland just as mystified as those here.

The case has received a lot of Detroit-area media attention, including print, radio and TV coverage. But a

gag order first imposed by 47th District Court Judge Fred Harris and continued by Judge Maria Parker has the Japanese media in the same dilemma as everyone else.

"We're interested in it," said Sumiko Miyamoto of Asahi TV, a company that distributes news of interest to the Japanese. "But if a gag order is in effect, we can't really talk to anyone

about the case."

Itsami Koga, 34, is accused of the first degree murder of her 26-day old son Tomoyuki in the early morning hours of Nov. 2. Koga, whose sister Midori Takayagi was visiting her family, is awaiting a decision by Judge Parker on Dec. 14 on whether she will be bound over to circuit court on the murder charge.

Koga is in the Oakland County Jail without bond. Her husband Akihiko, an engineer with Nissan in Farmington Hills, and her sister have had their passports withheld pending further court proceedings.

But Japanese journalists, like their American counterparts, have been left in the dark about several issues in the case, including why the prosecutor's office is seeking a first degree murder conviction. A conviction for first degree murder carries a life sentence with no parole in Michigan.

Assistant Oakland Prosecutor Lynda Rubin, who handled Koga's Nov. 3 arraignment, asked Judge Harris not to try and control the media. Harris said he wasn't.

See MEDIA, 2A

Farmington Hills has its nuns story



STAFF PHOTO BY SHAWN LAMBLEX

A cloistered life: Sisters Mary Elizabeth and Marie of the Annunciation pause at a statue of Mary and Jesus. Below: Sister Mary Paul spends time assembling icons.

Convent flourishes in divine seclusion

Recently the Observer was invited where very few people have gone before — home of the cloistered Dominican nuns, the monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills.

BY IRVING GALE
STAFF WRITER

A small bulletin board posted with letters asking for prayers is a pipeline of communication for the nuns at the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament.

People write and ask the 40 cloistered Dominican nuns to pray for their intentions. The letters are a small piece of the outside world — a society that these women have removed themselves from.

And even though they don't talk, unless it's necessary, their constant smiles scream of their happiness and fulfillment.

"People often say to us: 'If people knew how happy you were they would flock to you,'" according to Sister Mary Thomas, prioress, which is the head of the monastery. "We are uncomprehended from the competitiveness in the world."

The nuns don't leave the compound on the northwest corner of 18 Mile and Middlebelt roads, except for a medical or dental reason or if a parent is gravely ill or dying.

They don't leave for holidays, not even Christmas. Family members are allowed to visit once a month, except during Advent or Lent. Ironically, Sister Mary Thomas said nuns become closer to their families when they enter.

In a visiting room, they are on one side of a room separated by a large opening, like a window, between them and the visitor. The separation is symbolic that they have renounced worldly things to focus on the adoration of God. The only people beyond the window are an occasional repair person or doctor.

See NEWS, 13A



District takes big step into technology

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Public Schools is going techno to the tune of \$5.48 million.

The massive technological undertaking, among other things, calls for 90 district buildings to be wired and linked to each other through the Internet, 70 additional for staff and administrators computers, and computers and telephones in every classroom.

The Farmington Board of Education approved what is being termed an "aggressive" plan at its Nov. 21 meeting.

In September, the board OK'd an agreement to join a consortium of Oakland and Macomb county intermediate and local schools on the Internet. The five-year MOANet agreement starts Jan. 1.

However, the MOANet pact only brings the Internet to the administration building. District officials decided to step up the process.

"It would probably be irrelevant if all we do is bring the Internet to the district and then don't establish the wide area network in the district and to the buildings," Superintendent Bob Marfield said.

New technology will be phased during the next three years. The plan includes:

■ Connect all district offices and media centers by a districtwide area network with E-mail and Internet.

See TROUBLE, 2A