

## Yes from page 1A

"I just wanted to do something we'd always remember," said prospective bridegroom Tim Salley, who graduated from North Farmington High in 1990 and from Michigan State University last spring. "My personality is such that I never do things in an ordinary way."

Bruce Salley agreed. "He was in a fraternity at MSU and they did all sorts of crazy things."

Tim Salley and Mead have jobs in the medical field. Salley works for Becker Orthopedics, a company that makes equipment that helps in the treatment of bone and joint disorders. Mead, a recent transplant from Iowa, is a nurse at Detroit's Sinai Hospital.

"They met in October," said Tim's mother, Gail Salley, also on hand to see the question popped. "They went out on one date and they've been together ever since."

Following Mead's answer in affirmative, the group ("There was about 20 of us," said Bruce Salley) repaired to The Cocker Bar and Grill in Novi, site of that first date in October.

"I was just overcome," said Tim Salley, recalling the event. "She was awesome. She was intelligent, she was beautiful, she was funny. I was just blown away."



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMIEUX

Social climber: A tuxedo-clad Tim Salley doesn't let a little snow stop him from reaching sweetheart Michelle Mead with a proposal of marriage.



Guess what, Mom?: Michelle Mead calls her mother in Iowa, while the Salley clan — brother Todd (left), Tim, nephew Ricky Hallett — and family friend Bill Hass savor the moment.

Rings and things: Tim Salley and his fiancée of several minutes, Michele Mead, look at the engagement ring.

## District muscled by court ruling to pick up retirees' health bills

BY LAURIE O'CONNOR  
AND TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITERS

Was that a sigh of relief or resignation at Farmington Public Schools central office?

Hard to tell with the ruling in the State Supreme Court case of Musselman vs. Gov. John Engler, which makes local school districts pick up the bill for retirees' health benefits.

Farmington Public Schools Assistant Superintendent for Finance Cheryl Cannon greeted the news with mixed optimism.

"For the time being we don't have to pre-fund retirement, which is good news in the short run," Cannon said. "But in the long run, we still have to pay for it."

The district earmarked \$8.7 million — 14.6 percent of salaries — for retirees' health and pension in this year's budget. Next year, that figure increases by \$557,000 to 15.43 percent.

Additional retirement costs take a bite out of the projected \$1.2 million in state aid Farmington expects to receive. Also, \$66,600 in professional development money has been cut, Cannon said.

Instead of a 2.5 percent increase in state aid, Farmington will likely see .7 percent raise, which is a \$669,000 raise.

"We're lucky at this point we don't have to make reductions," said Cannon, who received an update at a Michigan School Business Officials meeting Friday.

"People from other districts were shaking their heads. We have a sufficient fund balance to carry us through times like these."

Local school officials may be disappointed but shouldn't have been shocked at the state Supreme Court's costly decision in the so-called Musselman case.

"The state is pushing it (school retirees health benefits) off on the locals. There will be

less dollars at the local level," said Justin King of the Michigan Association of School Boards.

"We estimate the annual payments will be up to 20 percent of salary. They're 15 percent now," said King. "You'd better budget for a minimum of 19 percent so you're not blindsided," he recalled telling the 562 school districts last May.

Those who budgeted accordingly will be safe. Those who didn't budget will be hurting. Total cost to the districts: \$500,000 or more.

"I assume the educational community will argue to the Legislature, 'Look, there's a need for additional state resources,'" said King. But he didn't sound confident they'll get it.

Big winner in the Musselman case was state government — the governor and Legislature. They won't have to pre-pay retirees' health benefits, a practice started in the 1980s, pared back under Gov. James Blanchard and halted entirely by Gov. John Engler.

### Big losers:

1. Michigan Education Association, which filed the suit on behalf of Ann Musselman and other retirees. They argued such benefits were a constitutional right.

2. School districts, which must pick up the costs on a pay-as-you-go basis out of their \$5,500 "foundation grants." They have 4 or 5 percent less to spend on staff, equipment, books and buses.

Engler's budgeting theory is to write any agency a lump-sum check and strip as many line items as possible out of the state budget. Retirees' health benefits were such a line item.

Meanwhile, Arthur Ellis, superintendent of public instruction, is expected to announce around Feb. 20 that per-pupil state aid will be cut. Reason: The number of pupils has jumped,

possibly due to the charterization of private schools, while a fixed amount of school aid is available.

Farmington officials have been told to expect a .003 percent cut, which amounts to \$100,000.

"Regardless of the court's ruling," said Rallie Hopgood, president of the Michigan Federation of Teachers, "we hope the state will continue to provide sufficient annual funding to provide decent health benefits to our retirees."

Hopgood asked lawmakers to use the "rainy day" fund and not cut taxes further.

The Retirement Coordinating Council, representing 29 school and state employee and retiree organizations, said, "Despite the court's decision, we hope health benefits pre-funding is the last retiree cookie jar we see raided by the governor and Legislature."

In a ruling that confused even some lawyers, the Supreme Court on Feb. 12:

■ Declared 7-0 that it lacked power to mandate that Engler and the Legislature continue to pre-fund retirees' health benefits.

■ Split on the question of whether the other two branches acted unconstitutionally in halting pre-funded benefits. Three justices said it was unconstitutional; three said it was constitutional; and Chief Justice James Brickley said the question was irrelevant — in effect siding with those who said the action was constitutional.

"It is a well-accepted principle of constitutional jurisprudence," wrote Brickley, "that courts do not engage in constitutional interpretation that is unnecessary to the disposition of the case at hand." Because the MEA's request for mandamus ordering Engler and lawmakers to pay up can't be granted, Brickley said it was unnecessary to decide the constitutional question.



## The only evidence of previous ownership is a dent in the price.

AFTER CAREFULLY INSPECTING A Select Edition Jaguar, you may have difficulty believing it was pre-owned — until you inspect the sticker price. So whether you desire a coupe, convertible or sedan, you'll find a Select Edition Jaguar to please both your automotive and fiscal sensibilities. For more information, see your nearest Select Edition Jaguar dealer, or for a complimentary full-color brochure, please call 1-800-4-JAGUAR.

- 6-year/75,000-mile factory warranty\*
- Strict age and mileage criteria\*\*
- 120-pt. mechanical/cosmetic inspection
- 24-hour roadside assistance

JAGUAR  
SELECT EDITION  
PRE-OWNED ALTHOUGH

They come from good homes.

JAGUAR OF TROY  
1815 Maplelawn Drive, Troy, MI (810) 643-6900

\*Warranty of original equipment. See your dealer for details of this limited warranty. \*\*Model 1992-1995 model cars only. 1996 model cars are available in this program. 1995-1996 financing through Jaguar is not available for qualified buyers. Dealer participation may vary. Excludes vehicles with a lease or a bank or credit union lease. Excludes vehicles with a lease or a bank or credit union lease.

### AGENDAS

Below are highlights from the agendas of meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

#### FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

CITY HALL, 474-8800

8 P.M. MONDAY, FEB. 19

#### AGENDA ITEMS INCLUDE:

- An activities update by Miss Farmington Audrey Chernaucka.
- Consideration to approve administration security person for the 47th District Court.
- Consideration to approve second annual Trout Derby.
- Consideration of resolution to

support Lakeland Trail Bike Path Project.

- Consider resolution of support for Oakland County's Enhanced Access Project.

■ Consideration to see policy and fees for use of Shiawassee Park Pavilion.

#### FARMINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION LEWIS SCHULMAN BUILDING, 498-3300

8 P.M. TUESDAY, FEB. 20

#### AGENDA ITEMS INCLUDE:

- School presentation by Farmington High.
- Presentation on community

survey results by Craig Ruff of Public Sector Consultants.

- Consider appointment of Plante & Moran as auditor.

■ Consider approval of district participation in the International Academy school-of-choice program for high school students.

■ Consider approval of Oakland Family Services lease agreement for property at 23460 Middlebelt Road.

- Consider approval of the ongoing frameworks process.

■ Award of bids for fixed asset appraisal, band uniforms, musical instruments, and non-linear video equipment.