



Look at that! Play-goers and Farmington Hills residents Julie Accentra and her 2½-year-old daughter Domenic watch the actors. They attended with husband Tony and son Anthony, 5½. Brandon, 4½ months, stayed home with his grandparents.

## Family Night

attraction during the evening at the designated "nature area" in Shannon Hall.

Mike Clark of Savanna Exotic Pets in Livonia brought along several wild critters, including a 10-month-old African serval, a 13-foot, 100-plus pound Burmese python, an Argentine albino Pac-Man frog, an Asian water monitor and other unusual creatures.

Farmington Hills Naturalist Joe Derek was there as well to share his knowledge of animals and the outdoors, as were other

■ **'This (Family Night) is really very nice . . . When I mentioned to the kids that there would be animals here, they couldn't wait to come.'**

Linda Bywater  
Farmington resident

members of the Farmington Hills Naturalist Club, like Carol and Bob Plummer.

"We're at Family Night every year. It's a great opportunity to do something for the city of Farming-

ton Hills — to give back to the community," Carol Plummer said. "We try to participate in every way we can as naturalists," she added.

Award-winning taxidermy artists Bob and Robbie Checchi of Westland also offered advice and information on wildlife and displays of their work. The Checchis are providing mounted wildlife and birds for the nature center at Heritage Park.

They brought along their 4-month-old pet Jamie, a Muntjac deer native to India, for folks to watch and pet. Jamie, which the Checchis liken to a puppy, didn't seem to mind a bit as dozens of curious hands reached through a small, makeshift fence to gently pat his fur.

Down the hall in Dublin Gym, scores of families enjoyed the stage performance of "The Magician's Nephew," presented by local touring group September Productions. The play charmed the audience with an exciting children's tale of magic and suspense.

"The entire evening is a great night for families," said Farmington Hills resident Sharee Booker, out with her daughters Lyndsey, 4, and Shelby, 6. "For Farmington and Farmington Hills, this is our activities center, so having a night like this gets people out to see the facility and what it has to offer.

This doesn't cost families anything to come here, and it's fun."

Lyndsey nodded at her mother, noting that she especially liked the nature area and touching the python. In fact, she enjoyed it so much that she decided she'd like a pet python of her very own.

Sharee, however, wasn't convinced that was such a good idea. Shaking her head, she grinned down at her daughter. "No, I really don't think so," she answered.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIER

Pool pals: Brian Burtha of Farmington Hills helps his kids, Alex, 6, and Jacki, 4, out of the Activities Center swimming pool.



The play's the thing: Tim Campos and Lise LaCasse, members of the Novi-based September Productions perform "The Magician's Nephew."

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That's some cat!

An African serval named Simbala (an exotic cat) is part of the animal display at Farmington Hills' Family Night.



## Public hearing planned on Hills oil exploration

BY TOM BAKER  
NEWS WRITER

Farmington Hills is in Michigan, not Oklahoma or Texas. But a northern Michigan oil company has visions of finding "black gold" under the Eight Mile/Haled area in the southwest corner of the city.

Westbay Exploration Company, which has shown an interest in oil drilling rights in Detroit-area suburbs, owns a small piece of property near Eight Mile and Haled area and has purchased some oil leases from nearby residents.

A public hearing on the possibility of drilling activities in the city will be held at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 25, as part of the regularly-scheduled Farmington Hills City Council meeting at City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake.

Westbay, located in Traverse City, doesn't meet certain city requirements for drilling operations, said Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi following the Feb. 26 city council meeting.

"They're too close to the nearest residential area and they're too close to the nearest building," Vagnozzi said.

About a year ago, some residents of the Meadowbrook Hills subdivision in the area were a little surprised — and a lot irritated — when a representative of the oil and natural gas exploration company showed up at their doors, asking if they'd like to get in on the enterprise.

A Westbay representative offered residents money up front and royalties on any oil or natural gas that comes from their property. Some leases were sold, but many residents didn't like the idea — even though the drilling would be done outside their subdivision.

During last Monday's meeting, council also:

- Approved by a vote of 7-0 the installation of seven speed bumps on Lancaster Street in the northwest corner of the city. Residents had complained about speeders

on Lancaster, which is often used as a connecting route between Haled and Haggerty roads.

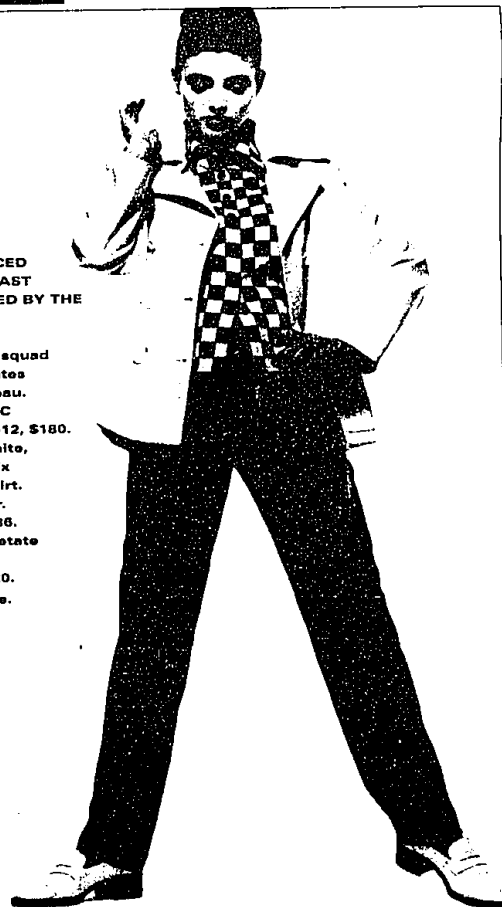
"The (speedbump) program was supported by the homeowners association," said Mayor Vagnozzi.

■ Voted 7-0 to change the zoning for Howard Road, a so-called "Natural Beauty" road that winds from Howard Road to Haled, south of I-696. Howard Road will now have a less-dense residential zoning in an attempt to keep over-development from the area. The Natural Beauty designation means that developers can't "rip up the road or the plantings and so forth," Vagnozzi said. A majority of homeowners would have to approve before the dirt road could be paved. Residents had said they wanted the road to keep its country flavor.

■ Cancelled its March 11 meeting because the majority of council members will be at an out-of-town conference. Council will meet Mondays, March 11 and 25, however.

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