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Farmington Observer

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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Signing off: A radio station's plan to pay a bounty for political signs from the recent election campaigns has angered some politicians. /A3

Death with dignity: A group is working to put the issue of "death with dignity" before the state's voters on the 1998 November ballot.

TASTE

Taste Buds: Chef Larry Janes explains step-by-step how to prepare your first Thanksgiving Day turkey. /B1

Healthful eating: Don't let the holidays go to "waist." Dietitian Peggy Martinelli-Everts offer tips for keeping pounds off during this season of sweet temptations. /B1

SPORTS

Cinderella Hawks: Surprising Farmington Harrison played for the championship of the Western Lakes girls basketball tournament Friday. /C1

Football playoffs: Seven-time state champion Farmington Harrison played Detroit Chadey. /C1

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Officials: It's Cattleman's



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Cattleman's Market — with its Thanksgiving display of corn stalks and haystacks outside — hardly resembled the place where health officials say a deadly bacteria harvested in a rooftop air unit.

Shortly after a 1 p.m. Friday news conference, traffic in and outside the Uptown Plaza market off Grand River and Orchard Lake remained busy as people were picking up items for the weekend. But shoppers had not yet heard that State and Oakland County Health officials pinpointed the

source of Legionnaires' disease outbreak, which led to four deaths and 30 reported cases. Officials from Cattleman's disagree with the findings. "It doesn't come from fruits and vegetables, does it?" asked Marge Pruitt, who had a bag groceries. "It's kind of scary." Like others since the outbreak, the Farmington Village Co-op resident retraced her steps in late September when health officials said most came in contact with the Legionella bacteria. "I might've," Pruitt said when asked she'd been

in the area. "I haven't been here in a month and half," said Rosenthal, 79, who travels from Southfield to shop at Cattleman's. "... I've had my car in the shop." "The prices are good on the fruits and vegetables, I've never had any problems in there. I find it clean and nice and the people, especially the manager, are so friendly." Health officials used Friday's news conference to stress the

See SOURCE, A2



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE

A real Legionnaire: Robert Pier, a member of the American Legion and a World War II veteran, pushes a grocery cart in front of Cattleman's Market, said to be the source of the outbreak of the Legionnaires' disease. "I was in World War II and the Korean War," said Pier. "I ain't gonna worry about that Legionnaires' disease."

Market won't accept verdict

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Officials from Cattleman's Market are not ready to accept the verdict that a rooftop air unit at its Farmington store is the sole source of a recent Legionnaires' disease outbreak.

State and county health officials say water samples taken from a rooftop air condenser found a high concentration of Legionella bacteria, which led to four deaths and 30 reported cases of the disease. The air-cooling unit has been sanitized and is safe, health officials added.

"I don't disagree with most of what I read in the report," said David Rehtbart, president and CEO of Cattleman's Market in a written statement. "I am more concerned about what's not there."

Cattleman's Market hired an environmental consulting firm, which finds faults in the Michigan Department of Community Health's report. Among those was that the condenser was cleaned six weeks before the outbreak, Cattleman's Market officials said.

The consultant also questions why only 17 of the 30 cases are epidemiologically linked to Cattleman's Market.

State and county officials stand by their findings.

"They take serious disagreement with this conclusion. We are not here to indict Cattleman's Market, who surely did nothing intentional to create this public health hazard," said Oakland County Executive L. Brook Patterson. "But the investigation leads to the doorstep and to the top of that building."

High levels of Legionella bacte-

See RESPONSE, A2

House also-ran chases muggers

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Steve Dibert may have lost his bid to represent the 37th District in Lansing, but he actively campaigned until the 11th hour.

The Farmington Democrat, 29, lost to Republican Andrew Raczowski in the Nov. 6 election for state representative but didn't find out until late in the evening — after chasing away a pair of muggers.

Dibert had been at a campaign gathering at the Botsford Inn on Grand River when he went out to his truck to get a bumper sticker for a supporter at about 10:15 p.m.

"I was going to my truck when I heard this waitress shouting and struggling," he said. "I yelled at the guy and he turned and shouted (a graphic threat)."

The woman was being escorted to her car by the desk clerk at the time. Two men, had approached the pair. Once had grabbed the woman and put a pistol against her ribs and demanded her purse.

The woman told police the man had told her and the clerk to "keep quiet or else I'll shoot you both."

Dibert, in the meantime, did not heed the men's warning, but instead began chasing them. He said it looked as if the gun's safety was on.

The unsuccessful candidate took a little verbal license at that point. "I shouted at them, 'Go ahead and shoot me, you idiot, I'm a political candidate,'" he said. "If you shoot me, it's a political assassination. You'll go to the electric chair." He believed me.

The man continued backing up, stumbling twice. "That led me to believe this was an amateur," Dibert

See MUGGING, A2

The word spreads through Farmington

BY TOM BAER
STAFF WRITER

So... now we know: It's Cattleman's.

An air unit atop that food market in the Uptown Plaza on Grand River in lower Farmington was the source of the deadly Legionnaires' disease, county health officials announced Friday.

It didn't take long for the word

— bad news if you're with Cattleman's; good if you work elsewhere — to sweep through the businesses on Grand River, Farmington's main drag.

So many air conditioners were suspect; so many were checked by the health department.

"For us, I'm glad they found it," said Melissa Heikkila, manager of the Grand Cafe in the basement of

the Cook Building. "I'm sorry for them (Cattleman's), though."

"I've had five people call me so far," Heikkila said. "They were saying, 'My gosh, we buy our meat there.'"

Heikkila said heavy media coverage of the Legionnaires' outbreak hurt business at the Grand Cafe, especially on weekdays.

"The TV news was always show-

ing the Civic Theater... every day they were right next to our door," she said.

At the Chamber of Commerce office on Thomas Street, office manager Diane Lis said, "I just hope it doesn't hurt her (Cattleman's) business, because it (the outbreak) is over. But you know how people are."

See REACTION, A2

Home owners take note

A free seminar for home buyers, sponsored by a Realtor, bankers and a home inspector, will be held 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 13, at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library, Liberty and State streets.

For reservations or more information, call Hazel Locklear at 478-6000.

'The Immigrant Experience'

A panel discussion on "The Immigrant Experience" will be held 8-9:15 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 14, at the Farmington Center, 33000 Thomas Street, Farmington.

Two questions to be discussed: What are some issues facing immigrants? and What immigrants go through in a land with a different lifestyle, language, educational system, etc.?

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Several presentations by actual immigrants with ties to the Farmington area — including Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi — will be held.

Presentations will be coordinated by Samir A. Hodad of the Farmington Public Schools and Polly Meyers Bachrouche of Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus.

"The Immigrant Experience" is sponsored by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council. The group presents monthly programs on diversity.

The programs are free and open to the public.

About the Civil War

Dave Finney, North Farmington High School history teacher, will speak on "The Civil War: A Living Legacy" at a meeting of the Farmington Genealogy Society at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 19, at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library, Liberty and State streets.

The program is open to the public at no charge.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335; faxed to 477-9722; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address is: pachy@online.com.