

# Farmington Observer

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Fatal crash:** A Farmington Hills woman walking in the street dies after she's hit by a car on Halsted near Grand River. Police are trying to figure out why she was in the road. /A2

**Calling partners:** Farmington Public Schools are looking for businesses to help with a French student exchange program. /A2

## COUNTY

**Gifts for needy:** A Denver woman and local churches, businesses and organizations organized the shipment of thousands of goods for the needy. /A7

## MALLS & MAINSTREETS

**Toy story:** If you don't have a Tickle Me Elmo under the tree, don't despair! Here are some alternative gift ideas for children from retail specialists. /A8

## TASTE

**Holiday dinner:** Give yourself the gift of time by preparing a no-fuss holiday ham dinner. /B1

**Santa snacks:** Cookies top the jolly man's list of favorite treats. A Snowman Oatmeal cookie will energize Santa for the long night ahead. /B1

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## Apartment dwellers alerted



BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police and fire officials are concerned about the number of runs and potential for worse problems at one of the city's largest apartment complexes.

Fire Marshal Steve Hume said a

Check your smoke detectors. That's the message the Farmington Hills Fire Marshal wants heard by residents of Independence Green Apartments. Officials are looking at extra police and fire runs to that complex.

Dec. 7 fire was the latest in a series of fire incidents that has him concerned about the safety of residents at the complex east of Halsted north of Grand River.

"There has been a fire-setting problem in the past," he said. "That's why it is important that

those smoke detectors work."

In the Dec. 7 fire, firefighters found that half of the smoke detectors in the building where a basement fire occurred did not work.

Fire reports show a smoke detector was reported not working in an apartment fire June 23 at Independence Green. In addition to the suspicious fire Dec. 7, a partial review of fire reports by officials also shows five arson or suspicious fires in 1985 and two in 1994.

"This is endangering people,"

Hume said.

David Clapper, general partner for Atlantic Management, the limited partnership that manages Independence Green, said he was not aware of any significant problems in the 980-unit complex.

"We're very surprised that he's making those comments," Clapper said. "They (smoke detectors) were working prior to him coming into the building."

Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer said

See APARTMENT, A2

## Tree planting honors girl's memory



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMAY

In remembrance: Ed and Teresa Winnicki planted a tree in Shiawassee Park to honor their granddaughter, Erin, whose visits to Farmington often included playing on the swings or sledging before she died of cancer at the age of 7.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Erin Elizabeth Briggs didn't live in Farmington, but the place is home to the memory of the little girl.

Her grandparents Ed and Teresa Winnicki reside on Power Road. Across the street is Shiawassee Park, where Erin would play on the swings or go see the fish winkle their way through the tributary on her visits.

During the winter, Erin would sled down the park's cascading hills — much like her mother, Jeannette, and her siblings did in their youth.

"When the kids came to visit, it's big deal for them to go down into the park," Teresa said. "It is one of the special spots for the grand kids."

Erin died Sept. 22 at her home in Nebraska following a year-and-a-half long battle with cancer. Her death came only five days after her seventh birthday.

She went into the hospital, complaining of headaches, when doctors found a brain tumor.

Surgeons attempted to remove a tumor — the size of her fist — over her left eye and discovered it was cancerous.

Afterward, Erin endured chemotherapy treatments and a bone marrow transplant.

Typical of her granddaughter, Teresa relates how the

See TREE, A5

## Zia's offers zest in big portions, for big groups

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Zia's restaurant on 12 Mile and Orchard Lake says ciao with chow to the area's families looking for good southern Italian food.

"We're trying to make this an experience for families," said general manager Corey Wright while sporting a Zia's pocket protector. "It's designed to be a fun place to eat in an old world style."

The restaurant is owned by the same management group that owned D. Dennison's Seafood, which was in the same building. The company also owns several Ann Arbor restaurants including Gratz's, a popular Italian restaurant on Main Street.

**"That's what we want you to feel like, like you're at your aunt's house."**

Corey Wright  
—Zia's general manager

"That's a special restaurant," said Wright of the famous Ann Arbor restaurant. "But this will be much different."

The decor is a give away that the two have few similarities other than that they are Italian restaurants. While Gratz's is elegant, with white tablecloths, Zia's has a more common touch with family photos, the familiar red and white checked tablecloths and an eclectic decor that includes Renaissance style cherubs painted on the ceiling with less lofty images in plastic.

"Some of the interior is designed with faults," Wright said, adding that it lends to the atmosphere that lets everyone have fun.

There is plenty of seating (for 280) and for those who really want a honky atmosphere, there is a table for 12 in the kitchen.

"Some people like the noise and hustle," he said. "We've had a lot of people sit in the kitchen."

See ZIA'S, A5

## Plenty of smiles



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMAY

Toast/roast: State Rep. Jan Dolan enjoys a dinner in her honor. For more on the event, see Page A3.

## Board set to take the plunge on \$110 million bond election

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington school board trustees went from talking about a proposed pool at a high school Tuesday to taking a big plunge.

And Trustee R. Jack Inch was giving them a push rather than a nudge.

The topic: A proposed \$110 million bond issue for building renovations and technology improvements.

For two hours during Tuesday's regular meeting, trustees continued to scrutinize the proposal put together by a strategic financial planning committee composed of district staff, parents and community members.

That's when Inch stepped in. "As Henry V said, 'Let loose the hounds of war,'"

said the veteran board member. "It's time to let the grayhounds run. If we go down with it, we go down with it. It's not the first time we've died in the snow with a project like this."

"We can talk it to death. I don't want to talk it to death."

**"As Henry V said, 'Let loose the hounds of war. . . if we go down with it, we go down with it.'"**

—Trustee, Farmington schools

Linda Enberg expressed reservations about a new pool at Farmington High and spending \$13

See BOND, A2

## Season rings in liquor sting

The Farmington Hills Police Department is checking to see whether establishments that serve liquor are naughty or nice.

As in previous years, the Farmington Hills police will conduct a liquor sting on one day between today and New Year's Day. The difference this year is the department isn't sending out a registered letter to each liquor license holder as in previous years.

"We looked at the expense and the fact that if they are doing what they are supposed to do, they won't have a problem," said police Chief Bill Dwyer.

As in past years, a police cadet, who is well under the legal drinking age of 21, will attempt to order an alcoholic beverage in each of the city's bars, taverns and restaurants that serve alcohol.

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

If he or she is asked for identification, the person will leave. If the cadet is served, the individual server is ticketed and the business must answer to the Michigan Liquor Control Commission concerning the violation.

### Driving for service

Farmington Public School bus drivers are touting another successful raffle to benefit the senior citizens of Farmington.

Employees and local community merchants donated items for a raffle Dec. 13 at the school's transportation office. All the money raised was used to send food certificates for Christmas and

Easter to help six senior citizen families.

### Jazz for Jenny

The public is invited to join a benefit musical performance of jazz music to help boost the Jenny Babb Leukemia Fund.

Jenny Babb is an 11 year old who suffers from Leukemia and Adolescent Diabetes, with this benefit being one of several aimed to help with the catastrophic medical cost associated with her illness.

The show features "3/4 Step featuring Roger Tucker" from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. Friday, Dec. 27, at Muirwood in Farmington Hills, off Grand River, between Drake and Halsted. Tickets are \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Featured will be a cash bar and food. The show begins at 8 p.m. For more details, call (810) 426-6845.