



All ears: Rhianna Stepan and father Brian of Farmington Hills share a chuckle with the Easter Bunny on Saturday. Children went on the hunt for bags of candy and other treats at the annual event sponsored by the Farmington Area Jaycees.

Some bunny business: The Easter Bunny drew children's names to receive prizes, which included watches, cameras and Detroit Vipers tickets.

PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN



Sugar free?: Aidan Anderson, 14 months, contemplates the nutritional value of pine cones after all the candy is gone.



Candy's dandy: Some 600 kids ranging in ages 1-12 turned out for the annual Easter Egg and Candy Hunt Saturday at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills.

Sweet success

Kids run eggs-tra fast in annual Easter hunt

Kids didn't need to be egged on to take part in the 42nd annual Farmington Jaycees Easter Egg (Candy) Hunt at Heritage Park Saturday.

Candy-seekers were let loose prematurely after a hurry-up call for people to get to the starting line was misinterpreted as a commencement of ceremonies. Some 600 kids got a jump start, snaring 1,400 bags of candy planted throughout the park.

Later, the Easter Bunny drew children's names during a free raffle. The bunny booty included bountiful Easter baskets, cameras, children's watches and Detroit Vipers tickets.

Area Kmart stores and The Palace of Auburn Hills contributed prizes.

Vehicles were back up onto Farmington Road, leading some kids to bail out and head for the park when they saw other children sprinting for sugar-coated nirvana.

"It's actually really great see-

ing all those kids and the smiles on their faces," said Carrie Hale, chairperson of the event. "Whether it's when the Easter Bunny arrives or when they've pulled candy out of their bags, it's very nice to see."

Carrie Hale:
—Farmington Area Jaycees

Kids were broken into three groups: ages 1-3, 4-7 and 7-and-above. The toddlers, of course, were handed candy while the oldest were sent running the furthest.

Jaycees kept candy bags on hand while searching for tears and disappointment. "We looked for kids who didn't get any and we clipped them a bag," Hale said. "Then you got the happy faces again."

Hills council votes to keep park in its natural splendor

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Council members are agreed on keeping Woodland Hills Park as a nature park.

How best to do that has been an issue for months.

At Monday's regular meeting, the council voted 5-2 for an ordinance to preserve the environmentally sensitive, 74-acre park for passive use.

Council members Terry Sever and Cheryl Oliverio opposed the measure, only because they wanted the stronger protection of a charter amendment. That would require voter approval.

"Right now we have nothing," said Councilman Jerry Ellis. "At least we'll have an ordinance on the books. We can always consider a vote of the people to change the charter."

A future city council could vote to repeal or change an ordinance, whereas it would take a vote of the people to change the charter.

"A charter change would require a vote of the people," Oliverio said. "But to change that, it would require another vote of the people. That offers more protection."

The council had considered other options to preserve the park's natural character, such as a nature conservancy. But council members did not want to deed over control of the park. That left them to either create an ordinance making it a nature park or pushing for a charter change on the November ballot.

"We could have it on the ballot this November," Sever said. "We would not have to vote to protect it from this council."

Mayor Vagnozzi said the ordi-

nance language could be strengthened with more specific language and a charter amendment can then be enacted. The language for a charter amendment would have to be approved and submitted to Lansing to be put on the November ballot.

"These (ordinance and charter revision) are not mutually exclusive," said Councilwoman Vicki Barnett. "Now we should strengthen the ordinance."

The ordinance, which the council will consider for enactment at the April 7 meeting, says in part that the park "having been identified and verified by qualified observers to have retained its natural character and possessed of unusual biotic and scenic features, is dedicated as a natural park. The city shall maintain the park so as to preserve its natural values."

Farmington DDA ranks 4 eateries vying for new tavern liquor licenses

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Rankings for restaurants that want liquor licenses are out and four restaurants are in the running.

Farmington Downtown Development Authority has listed four restaurants that want licenses to sell wine and beer with meals. The DDA ranked each establishment and made a recommendation to Farmington City Council for approval.

City council has planned a hearing 8 p.m. Monday, April 7, at city hall.

The city wants applications approved and ready to go to the state Liquor Control Commission, which will grant 50 licenses statewide to restaurants in DDA districts in cities with populations 50,000 or less.

Luigi's restaurant on Farmington Road, south of Grand River, is first in line, according to the DDA.

Mrs. Lovill's Tea Cozy on Grand River is No. 2 on the list followed by Dimitri's on Grand River and Thai Kitchen in the Village Commons.

The DDA believes one or two Farmington businesses could get tavern or Class C licenses.

Liquor licenses are granted on the basis of population, which means older cities that are already built up typically do not receive new permits.

Deris Lovill has her fingers crossed. She wants to offer dinner at her popular restaurant, which serves lunch and "high tea."

"We're conducting a survey and right now it's running 95 percent of people who say they'd love to come to dinner," Lovill said, "but they said it's also important to be able to select something from the wine list."

Luigi's folks are excited by the prospect of putting the wine with dine.

"We hope it will bring more people into Farmington in general," said Jim McNulty, chef at the Italian eatery. "We think we have got a great restaurant here."

"It kind of goes hand and hand: Italian food and wine."

The DDA board first considered whether the applicants met the state guidelines for the special liquor licenses: 50 percent of

their sales had to be in food; and that they are open 10 hours a day and five days a week.

Other things considered were volume of customers and whether the businesses had applied for liquor licenses in the past.

Luigi's has attempted to get a liquor license since it opened two years ago. Ranking restaurants to receive a coveted liquor license was not easy, city officials said.

"That's difficult to do," City Manager Frank Lauffoff said. "We have a couple of downtown restaurants that are high draws. It's a judgment decision."

City officials would like to see the state Legislature renew the act next year, too.

Farmington officials wouldn't mind if the act was modified so older cities could offer a liquor license to entice new businesses.

Many restaurants are interested in opening downtown, but the lack of a liquor license is a stumbling block, Lauffoff said.

"Older downtowns need help," Lauffoff said. "This is a proven way to stimulate downtowns."

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