

Babies galore: Pauline McKenna made the trip from Canada to weigh the offerings displayed by Don Kelly of Livonia during the busy Beanie Babies show Sunday in Farmington Hills.



Beanie benefit raises bundle

BY TODD WICKS

It looked like the floor of the New York Stock Exchange at the William Costick Activity Center on Sunday: Throngs of excited people buying, selling and trading, arguing prices, searching frantically for the best deal.

However, the hot commodities being bargained over that day were none other than those infamous Beanie Babies, hundreds of which were brought by their owners for Farmington's first fund-raising Beanie Baby Swap Meet.

"I had a complete set of the retired Beanie Babies, and I thought, 'I'd rather use them to raise money for somebody,'" said Sharon DiPaolo, organizer of the event. "I called a friend in the Silver Liners Foundation, and she told me about Neill Sladkin."

Sladkin, 12, is a former Farmington-area resident who has Crohn's Disease, a disorder causing a chronic inflammation which usually affects the small intestine or colon. The cause of Crohn's is still unknown. Sladkin had been trying to raise money for medical research, and received \$2,500 from the entrance tickets and sales of raffle tickets to those hoping to win.

DiPaolo's complete set. (It went to a "very excited" family from Lansing who left early and then drove all the way back to Farmington Hills to collect the prize.)

Nearly 400 people attended the event, some from as far away as Chicago. DiPaolo estimated that about two-thirds of the attendees were fully-grown adults.

"It's an adult thing," she said, reciting the list of injuries her daughters received from grown-ups while jockeying at booths for rare Beanie Babies to complete their collection. "The poor kids, they don't have a chance."

But lots of children got chances to build their Beanie Babies arsenals on Sunday, including a few young entrepreneurs who rented their own table to sell off

■ 'The poor kids, they don't have a chance.'

Sharon DiPaolo
—sale/swap organizer

their doubles.

The only down side of the swap meet, DiPaolo said, came from some of the 50 vendors who came to sell some of the most highly-sought after Beanie Babies — at several times the original \$5 cost. "The retired ones were going anywhere between \$50-200," DiPaolo said. "I was very disappointed in these people."

Despite their fund-raising power, DiPaolo sees the end of the Beanie Baby craze. "I think it's dying," she said. "It was a big thing after the holidays. In the summer, especially, people have better things to do."



Crowded center: The lure of Beanie Babies drew more than 400 people to the William Costick Center Sunday.



Careful shopper: 10-year-old Brett Griffin of Southfield tries to decide which stuffed creature to purchase with his \$10 bill.

Counseling victims important to Optimist Club's Officer of the Year

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Area Optimist Club has named Farmington Hills Officer John Markey as the Police Officer of the Year for 1996.

Since joining the department in 1984, Markey has served in the traffic section, crime suppression unit (plain clothes surveillance), and the patrol division where he currently works on night support shift.

Markey is also a member of the department's honor guard and field training officer program.

"I think patrol is the best job in the department," said Markey. "You have the opportunity to work in all aspects of law enforcement. You have a lot of contact with people and the chance to give advice and be someone people can talk to."

Markey said counseling crime victims, people who are grieving and others is one of the most important skills an officer can have.

"Nobody hears about that aspect of police work," he said. "You read about arrests, or when an officer makes a mistake. But we spend a lot of time providing for the human element."



Officer Markey

Markey is a Romeo High School graduate and has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Michigan State University.

The 13-year veteran has earned the department's Life Saving Award, the Valorous Conduct Award, eight citations, 10 unit citations, five certificates of commendation and several Letters of Appreciation.

Markey, a Michigan State University graduate, was named the city's Police Officer of the Year in 1992.

On the night of Dec. 7, 1995, Markey and another officer responded to a mobile home fire at the Flamingo Mobile Home Park.

Both officers arrived at the scene before firefighters and were told by neighbors that an elderly man lived in the mobile home.

They were able to locate the man by breaking out windows; they forced open the front door in an effort to rescue the man, but were pushed back due to the

intense heat.

With the assistance of firefighters and at great personal risk to himself, Markey was able to remove the man from the mobile home. Unfortunately, the man had died from smoke inhalation.

Markey was treated by paramedics for smoke inhalation as a result of his rescue attempt.

For his bravery and disregard for his own personal safety, he was awarded the department's Valorous Conduct Award.

On Jan. 28, 1996, Markey observed a suspicious vehicle occupied by two people. His investigation resulted in the arrest of both for possession of cocaine with intent to deliver.

His investigation earned him a Department Commendation.

Markey continually sets a performance level well above average. Since joining the department in 1984, he has made more than 2,400 arrests.

Markey is one of the department's best at making arrests involving illegal drug or alcohol use.

"I certainly make an effort to be aware of those problems," he said. "In my view, drug use is a motivation in a lot of other crimes."

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Unitarian church digs its 150th birthday

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington began celebrating the 150th anniversary of the church early by starting an archeological dig on the property at 25301 Haledale in Farmington Hills.

"It's a part of a whole series of things planned for 1997, 1998 and 1999," said the Rev. Suzanne Paul.

Lea Kunze, an archeologist from Kalamazoo, is directing the "dig," which began on May 4, every Sunday and Monday. The church incorporated in 1849. The congregation met at the old Warner Building beginning in 1853 before moving to the present site, which was once a farm,

Paul said.

The archeological digging is just one of many programs planned to lead up to the sesquicentennial in May of 1999.

■ In November of this year, a fund-raising concert, open to the public, will be presented.

■ In July of 1998, the church will sponsor a float in the Farmington Founder's Day Festival Parade.

■ On Sept. 6, 1998, the church will have a reunion picnic.

■ A concert is scheduled for Nov. 14, 1998.

■ A gala dinner and dance will honor distinguished members of the congregation, past and present, on Jan. 30, 1999. Dignitaries and members of the historical society will be invited as

well.

■ An original play, written by Donna Svoboda, a congregation member, and performed by members of the congregation concerning the history of the Universalist-Unitarian movement, will be presented on March 14, 1999.

■ The church history, "First 150 Years," by Gwen Foss will begin publication.

■ On May 22-23, 1999, a cocktail party will include the unveiling of an original piece of art celebrating the anniversary. The Rev. John Buchner, president of the Universalist Unitarian Association, will attend. The official celebration on that Sunday will honor past members, ministers and local dignitaries.