



Stars for a night: Above, parents and assorted from paparazzi descend on that night's attendees.

Farmington High's date with the prom

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Like a fleet of rented limousines invading your subdivision, it strikes — Prom season.

This week saw both North Farmington and Farmington high schools holding their senior proms, giving lots of tuxedo rental stores their best week of the year. Mom and Dad another excuse to dust off the video camera, and plenty of area students one last dance before leaving the protective nest of high school.

"It wasn't about who had the nicest dress or the most expensive limo," said Erin Wasen, a graduating senior who attended Farmington High's prom Wednesday. "Everybody was just kind of together to have a good time. It was kind of like a last hurrah, a last dance for everybody."

"Oh, What a Night" was the theme of the event, inspired by the Four Seasons song of the same name. In accordance with Farmington High tradition, the prom was held at The Roostertail in Detroit.

Wasen, a senator on her school's class council, helped organize the event. Several senior class fund-raisers helped make this year's prom tickets the least expensive in school history.

"We sold entertainment books, held an all-school dance. . . You name it, we did it, basically," she said.

But along with all the fun and flash of prom night, there's always an undercurrent of sadness. "It's kind of like an end to an era. It's one of the last times most of a graduating class is gathered together."

"This is what you wait for," said Wasen, who will



Seniors socialize: An overview of Farmington High seniors looking their best at the photo session at the Gov. Warner Mansion in Farmington.

move away to attend college in the fall. "Ever since I was a freshman, it was, 'Oh, senior prom.' It's made out to be so much. When you're actually going, it doesn't seem like, 'This is it.' In a way, it is sad, but all good things come to an end, I guess."

As much a part of prom tradition as big hairdos and limousines is the obligatory sleepless night spent with friends afterward. Wasen and her entourage squeezed every last minute out of their limousine service, cruising around until 2 a.m. Later, she and about 30 seniors headed back to a friend's pool party and finally crashed at 7 a.m.

"I'm still kind of lacking sleep," said Wasen. "Yesterday I said to my mom, 'I'm still not making sense. I'm not speaking in complete sentences. I think I should go to bed.'"



Say cheese: Patrick Groves and Christie Ploski pose to have their picture taken by Patrick's mother, Colleen, on Wednesday afternoon before the prom.

WB proposes plans for new 'Gateway' development

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

After years of withered plans, the development of West Bloomfield's "gateway" appears to be at hand.

Schmier & Feuring Properties of Boca Raton, Fla. has submitted to the township a tentative proposal to develop the tract at the northwest corner of Orchard Lake and 14 Mile.

Specifications have not been determined, but under the proposal approximately two-thirds of the site will be devoted to retail along 14 Mile and Orchard Lake. The remaining area to the northwest will be set aside for multi-family dwellings, and the area to the southwest will be set aside for office space.

The 53-acre area is one of the last remaining undeveloped large tracts in West Bloomfield.

"We agree that it is a gateway," said Robert Schmier, president of Schmier and Feuring. And as such, he said, "We will have absolutely a first-class development. Basically the whole site will be developed, but the wetlands will be preserved."

The company is preparing a preliminary development master plan to present to the township planning commission.

"The plan is to get through the approval process in six months," Schmier said. If there are no major problems the area could be developed by the end of 1998.

Schmier said that development will be coordinated with proposed road improvements to 14 Mile and Orchard Lake, which suffer from severe congestion during rush hours.

Widening 14 Mile and Orchard Lake is being considered along with installing turn-around lanes.

"We want to move traffic through the intersection to prevent cars from queuing up," Schmier said.

■ 'We will have absolutely a first-class development. Basically the whole site will be developed, but the wetlands will be preserved.'

Robert Schmier
—Schmier and Feuring

"The road improvements would greatly improve traffic flow even with the development," he said.

Area residents had earlier expressed concern about further development at the intersection in light of the announced plan to build a Super Kmart and other development on the southeast area of the intersection in Farmington Hills.

But, said West Bloomfield Supervisor Jody Hood, "what goes on in Farmington Hills cannot be regulated by West Bloomfield despite what objections might arise from the community."

But, she said, "we can share concerns."

"Whether formally or informally the two communities ought to get together," she said.

It's inevitable

Lorna McEwen, vice president of the Concerned Citizens for West Bloomfield, essentially said while residents may not like to see development at the West Bloomfield site, it is inevitable.

"While we understand that this section will not remain open forever, we believe that the planning commission, township board, developer and residents should be able to work together for a gateway which will make us all proud to continue to live here or move in as newcomers," according to McEwen.

The Concerned Citizens is a group of residents that has moni-

tored development in the township, particularly proposals for the 14 Mile-Orchard Lake area.

Coincidentally, the group months ago had scheduled a regular meeting for two weeks ago to discuss plans for the tract before learning of the latest development plan, McEwen said.

"We had scheduled it because we had a feeling that something would happen here," McEwen said.

"A lot of people wanted it to remain open space but I don't think anybody thought it would remain vacant."

The approximately 60 people who attended were asked for their input on how the land should be developed.

The most popular suggestion was to use the site for parks and green space, including an open-air farmers' market with an ice skating rink in winter and ball fields.

Another popular suggestion was to use the site for a cultural center surrounded by a park or playground. Senior citizen housing was seen as another option.

Not approved by anyone at the meeting were proposals for retail development, office/medical space, a gas station or multifamily residences.

"People were really most interested in seeing something to reflect the quality of life in West Bloomfield," McEwen said. "They don't want a total wasteland of development."

Hood said the developers were informed of the residents' comments. "They have received all the concerns and comments and will go back to the drawing board," Hood said.

Schmier said that the company is sensitive to the concerns of the residents. Formerly a West Bloomfield resident, Schmier said, "We are Michiganders originally and go back many years. We're not some out-of-state developer who doesn't know this town."

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