

Hoodown: The Texas Dancers demonstrate some of their Lone Star State moves in the Founders Festival Showmobile in the downtown center parking lot.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEBLANC



Founders Fest casts glowing light on area

The in-boxes for mail and calls at the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce offices are "4-feet deep" this week.

Last week's Founders Festival captured the attention of chamber staff, according to Jody Soronen, public affairs director for the chamber.

And everyone seemed thrilled that Mother Nature cooperated with this 33rd annual festival. "I think we were very pleased," Soronen said Tuesday. "With an outdoor festival, weather is always a good percentage of the game. We had beautiful weather."

Overall, chamber and city officials estimate 70,000 to 80,000 people visited the weeklong events, from Kids Day and Miss Farmington pageant during the week, to the parade, games and craft displays on Thursday through Saturday.

"The food vendors did very well, crafters did very well. To us, that means they're offering the kinds of things our visitors want to buy," Soronen said.

Farmington's event didn't really suffer, despite four other towns hosting major outdoor events that same weekend — including art shows in Plymouth and Wyandotte. As for scheduling, Soronen noted, "Farmington did not change their date."

What could change next year? "We'll take a couple weeks to assess all of that, the little things we need to tweak," Soronen said.

One target might be the length of the parade, which lasted more than 2½ hours. "Other than the shriners and the two fife and drum corps, they're almost all local people who want to be in the parade," she said. "It's tough to say no to them."

Along with the work of their staffs, chamber president Maria Esposito credited the dozens of terrific volunteers — from the radio club that han-



Doughy delights: Lauren Conte, 7 of Farmington eats a slice of pepperoni pizza — one of many food offerings.

died communications during the parade to the folks who helped make sure parade marchers left on time. "The overall festival and raffle was very successful this year," she said. "The traffic downtown was busy and nonstop for three days."

The festival generally costs the chamber around \$50,000 to put on. In public services and public safety overtime, it costs the city of Farmington tens of thousands of dollars more.

However, City Manager Frank LaHoff said the event pays off in many ways.

"It is a hometown event. People come down to meet each other, to sit around the fountain," he said. "When you bring that many people, you create an image for the community, and that's the most important thing. The image of the Farmington area is a community image of two communities working together as one. And that translates into a lot of things that you can't measure."

LaHoff noted things such as increased property values and housing starts.

"If people feel good about going there, that means a lot. And you can't advertise enough on radio and in the newspapers to create that feeling."



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMEYER

Plugging along: Jake Zachos, 6, of Novi blocks his ears to the sirens from passing police and fire vehicles in the parade.



Ground level: Spectators arrived early to catch a curbside glimpse of the annual Founders Festival parade Saturday morning. The parade was one of the longest in recent memory, lasting 2½ hours.

STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMEYER

Festival produces parade of winners

This year's Founders Festival Parade award winners were:

President's Award (best festival theme): Salem United Church of Christ.

Queen's Trophy (original concept): Gill Elementary School.

Commercial floats: First place

— Botsford Hospital; Second place — Special Services (Farmington); Third place — Village Clipper.

Organizational float: First place — Salem United Church; Second place — Gill Elementary; Third place — Farmington Twins.

Baton corps: First place — Janet's School of Baton.

Precision drill team: First place — Barbara Hatch; Second place — Harrison High; Third place — Farmington Varsity.

Arts Commission Award: Salem United Church.

Trio of companies negotiate to share broadcasting tower

BY VIVIAN DEGAJIN
STAFF WRITER

There are no mixed signals from the Farmington Hills Zoning Board of Appeals to three communications companies negotiating to share one broadcasting tower.

The board hopes the three companies will work out the business details and make it happen, loud and clear.

Last week, the zoning board granted a variance for a new 120-foot monopole antenna tower to replace an existing lattice-type on Enterprise Court near the city's DPW at 12 Mile and Halsted.

The new Time Warner Cable Television tower could also combine sites for two other companies, AT&T Wireless Services Inc. and Sprint F.C.S.

"We are trying to grant the fewest number of towers in residential areas in Farmington Hills," said Richard Corey, board chairman. "We are holding their feet to the fire, asking them to do their homework and letting them know we are not pushovers."

Jan Goldfarb, a member of a community cellular tower study committee for the past two years, said she applauded the decision, and hoped other cellular companies would follow this direction.

"I think they are doing the right thing. I'm very happy to see that city council and the ZBA is listening to residents and acting responsibly," she said.

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—cellular tower committee member

The council did listen this week, when members voted unanimously to approve a new cellular tower ordinance. A key element involves refusing to allow towers and antennas in residential property — they must be located on commercial or municipally zoned land. Other provisions include a maximum tower height of 100 feet, or 120 if two or more providers share a tower. Setbacks must be 500 feet or more from residential lots for towers, and 300 feet for antennas. Setbacks can be 300 feet for towers in zoned residential areas upon 60 percent approval of those residents.

Public hearings and "certificates of need" are also required.

Goldfarb said numerous groups are organized to oppose any new building of cell towers in residential areas.

"The Council of Homeowners, with members from 75 homeowners associations, and other suburban groups have collected 10,000 letters to keep antennas in any way shape or form away

from residents," Goldfarb said.

She said no one is trying to prevent cellular companies from doing business. "As long as you give cellular people places where they can go, in business, commercial or industrial areas, they can reconfigure their grids and work it out."

City attorney John Donohue said the revised Farmington Hills cell tower ordinance has generated some comment from other attorneys regarding its restrictive nature. "But the question is whether or not there's sufficient room elsewhere within non-residential areas in the city," he said.

"I don't think any of the companies are interested in litigating against the city, as long as sites are in fact available to satisfy customer demand," Donohue said.

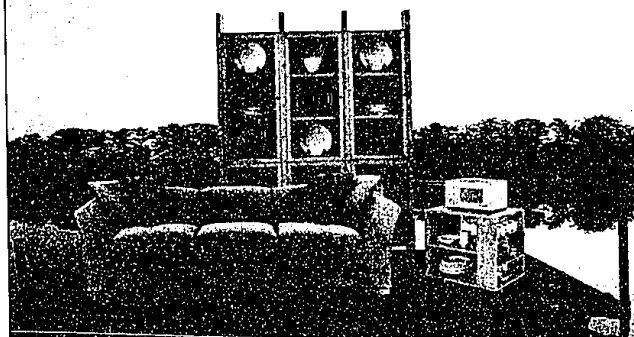
According to John J. Riley for AT&T Wireless Services, Inc., AT&T and Time Warner are working out master lease details to finalize an agreement on the 12 Mile/Halsted location and were including Sprint in the discussion.

"AT&T always intended to have additional users. Sprint is a newcomer to this proposal and we have yet to work out all the details with them," he said.

Riley said once the contracts are ready, construction happens as quickly as 30 days.

Bruce Smith, spokesperson for Sprint, said while the company is pursuing negotiations with Time Warner she would not comment about the process.

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