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# Farmington Observer

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Bond issue:** The man charged in an armed robbery in West Bloomfield and suspected in a Farmington Hills murder got his bond reduced from \$1 million. /A2

**Even dozen:** So far, 12 people have taken out petitions to run for Farmington Hills City Council. Check out names and deadlines. /A3

## COMMUNITY LIFE

**Vintage Farmington:** Learn the local legend of the Potawatomi Curtain. /B1

## SPORTS

**Coach retires:** In a sudden and surprise announcement, longtime coach Larry Baker has resigned as coach of the Mercy High School girls basketball team. /C1

## AT HOME

**Family affair:** An Oakland County family has found a new life making artistic accessories for the home. /D10

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## Maple Drugs joins chain gang



By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

The closing of the Maple Drugs on Grand River Avenue is part of an ongoing business trend, but not buying what the market is prescribing. Maple Drugs in Drakeshire Plaza on Grand River closed July 15 after being bought out by Rite Aid. The

acquisition included another Maple outlet in Ann Arbor. The store's operations and prescriptions were transferred to the Rite Aid in the nearby Muirwood Square on Grand River and Drake, which used to be Efron Drugs — another independently-owned pharmacy until Perry Drugs bought it out. Rite Aid subsequently acquired Perry. Similar acquisitions by major chains in the past couple of years have led to the closing of Maple

Drugs (bought out by Arbor) in the Downtown Center and Bol-Air Drugs (acquired by Rite-Aid) in the Orchard-10 Plaza. "I understand that's business," said Jo D'Anna, who had her prescriptions filled at Maple Drugs, "but I won't go to Rite Aid. I won't give them the satisfaction. "I'm devastated. I've been going to (Maple Drugs) since I moved here 12 and half years ago." Instead, the resident of Detroit Baptist Manor is taking her busi-

ness to Kmart in the Grand-Halested Plaza. Maple Drugs had been an institution in Farmington for several years. The company's president refused to comment when contacted. "Competition being what it is, mom and pop operations in most anything anymore are finding it tougher and tougher to compete," said Jody Soronen, Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce. Please see DRUG STORE, A8

## Don't stop the rain



STAFF PHOTO BY DEYAN MITCHELL



Tasty sounds: Jacob Fairbanks, 3, above, leans outside the umbrella to get a mouthful, while his mother, Andrea, and sister, Christina, 3, listen to the sounds of Bob and Carl. That's Bob Balch on guitar and Carl Zimmerman on keyboard in the photo at right. The "under the gazebo" concert next to the Village Commons on Grand River is part of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority's Friday night series. In the photo at left, Ann Finkowski, left to right, Helen Forfinshi and Martha Turner listen to the music, which ranged from the '60s to the '90s, and even included one polka.



STAFF PHOTO BY DEYAN MITCHELL

## Better response, timing key state testing reforms

By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Just-approved revisions to the state's controversial High School Proficiency Test score big with Farmington schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield on at least one count.

Districts should get more-specific feedback as to where students are succeeding or failing on the test, which is entering its third year.

According to revisions approved last Thursday, the writing portion of the HSPT will be broken down and examined in several categories by the state Department of Education — rather than providing an overall grade. To be graded separately will be areas such as content, ideas, organization, style and writing.

**There's something wrong about testing kids in September. The MEAP stuff is practically waiting for them on the first day.**

Bob Maxfield  
—superintendent,  
Farmington

and writing.

"The most important part," said Maxfield, "is we'll start getting information" specific enough to make "diagnostic judgments. That would be a welcome change. The frustration with the writing part is you just don't have a handle on what the problems are."

According to Harrison High School English teacher Tom Schroeder, the revisions continue what is becoming an annual tune-up.

"Last year, from the first year it was administered, it was made more specific," Schroeder said. "This looks like just another refinement coming up."

Schroeder did not note much discord about the HSPT the first two years it was given, but added "The

Please see TESTS, A8

## Carvers bites into steak, stogie market



By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Where's the beef? It's at the same place where Sinatra, not Elvis, is still king and where the regulars don't frown on a whiff of cigar smoke. Sell-off-the-fork prime rib and the old "Big City"

steakhouse atmosphere, a la Chicago's Mortons, are served up on a gravy-covered platter at Carvers Steaks & Chops, a "carnivorous retreat" off of 10 Mile Road near the Grand River-M102 interchange in Farmington Hills.

And general manager Frank Suchara doesn't apologize for the emphasis on beef, beef and more beef in this era of health-conscious

menus and diners. "Beef gets a bad rap," said Suchara, who took over the 225-seat restaurant in November, when it changed from Mountain Jacks to Carvers, the only one in Michigan. Both national chains are owned and operated by Paragon Steakhouse Restaurants, Inc. "There's very little fat on a filet, or a top sirloin, for that matter. It's lean. There's a lot of good stuff in there."

There's a lot of good stuff at Carvers, too. And we're not just talking about the food — even though, as Suchara said, "steak's the star." How can it not be, with 20-ounce porterhouse steaks and 1 1/2-lb. cuts of prime rib?

"It's a beautiful presentation," he said about the prime rib. "It's huge and gorgeous."

Carvers banks on its atmosphere almost as much. The lights are

turned down low and piped-in music from the Golden Age of radio is turned up. The familiar voices of Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland and Tony Bennett dominate, but not to the point where patrons can't mingle and enjoy conversation.

"It's usually a little darker," said assistant manager and head bartender Christian Dicker. Both the smoking section and lounge feature glass ashtrays almost large enough to use as bowls, obvi-



STAFF PHOTO BY DEYAN MITCHELL

Starring steak: Frank Suchara shows off the attractions at Carvers Steaks & Chops.

ously for the cigar-smoking aficionados who comes to Carvers. Along a wall in the plush lounge is

Please see CARVERS, A8

## Pitching the peel

Angry words and at least one banana peel were exchanged during a traffic altercation on 12 Mile and Orchard Lake last week.

A Dearborn man, 32, told Farmington Hills police he was cut off while exiting I-96 onto northbound Orchard Lake. He claimed the other driver got out and kicked his vehicle, causing a black scuff mark damage on the front fender. Police questioned the other driver, a Farmington Hills man, 20, who said he cut off the 1988 Honda Prelude but accidentally.

When both vehicles were stopped for a light, the Dearborn man got out of his vehicle and started banging on the passenger window. That prompted the Farmington Hills man to get out of

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

his vehicle and kick the front wheel of the Honda Prelude.

The driver of the Honda Prelude then exited his car again and threw an unknown object, later described as a banana peel, at the 1995 Ford Escort.

The Hills man followed the Honda Prelude to 14 Mile and Orchard Lake, blocking him into his parking spot before calling police. Police found a dent and scratch on the passenger door of the Ford Escort. Police issued the Dearborn man a ticket for malicious destruction of property.

Police examined the Honda Prelude for damage and saw the black scuff mark, which the driver said was caused when the Hills man kicked his car. However, the Hills man was wearing white-soled shoes.

## Garner sound

The Red Garner Band will bring its Dixieland tunes from the 1920s, '30s and '40s to downtown Farmington Friday.

The free concert is hosted by the Farmington Downtown Development Authority and Mrs. Lovill's Tea Cozy. It starts at 7:30 p.m. Friday under the gazebo next to the Village Commons on Grand River. Blankets or lawn chairs are recommended.