

City lights illuminate season's sparkle

Event flips switch on festive tradition

Lights, cameras and... action. So, there was a damp chill in the air during the city of Farmington Hills annual Holiday Lights Ceremony outside city hall on Orchard Lake and 11 Mile Nov. 25.

That's nothing new. Besides, warm wishes, heart-filled songs and Santa's red fleece and long white beard more than provided cuddle comfort.

After children and Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi switched on the lights for this season's city hall illumination, everyone was able to retreat inside new Fire Station No. 5 for refreshments.

Farmington Hills Community Chorus led everyone in song while Santa later took gift wish notes from a gaggle of kids. Mayor Vagnozzi put the fifth annual event into perspective during his traditional holiday greeting.

"We have been blessed to live in a wonderful community with its wonderful people," Vagnozzi said. "We are doubly blessed to have so many children taking part in this ceremony as we begin a period when we pay attention to and appreciate our families and friends."

"Toys and gifts are an important part of our celebration but let us remember that love, friendship, compassion, concern for others and working for peace is what this season is all about."

Vagnozzi was joined by his council colleagues and other city staff during the holiday lighting ceremony.

The event, which is put together by the Special Services Department, took place near the new fire headquarters building that officially opened this year.



Light help: Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi receives some help flipping the switch on holiday lights outside Farmington Hills City Hall Nov. 25.



No Ho hold: Five-year-old Connor Stec of Farmington Hills had lots of hugs for Santa while giving his list to Kris Kringle at Fire Station No. 5.

Adult ed staff gets pay hike

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

For the first time, adult education teachers in the Farmington Public School District will get paid to better prepare for their classes.

According to the terms of a one-year agreement approved by the school board, 27 adult education teachers will receive a 2 percent salary increase, leave days, health insurance and classroom preparation time, which amounts to one hour for every 7 1/2 hours of teaching time.

Susan Zurvalec, the district's assistant superintendent for staff and community services, said the full-time adult education teachers will earn an hourly wage ranging from \$16.23 to \$19.70.

Also receiving a 2 percent wage increase are adult education teaching aides, child care providers and office clerks, who make less than classroom teachers. They will not receive the other benefits, however.

Zurvalec said the agreement was noteworthy because it marked "the first time" the district met directly with representatives for the adult education staff (who are non-union employees) to discuss compensation.

Talks for the department were previously handled through a consortium, coordinated by Huron Valley Schools.

Farmington looked at what other districts are doing in terms of paying teachers for prep time, Zurvalec said.

"They requested, and rightly so, some compensation to allow them time to prepare on a daily basis and be paid for that," she said.

Up to now, the teachers have had to do their prep work at home, off-the-clock.

Other terms of the adult education teachers' agreement include the following:

- Leave days to cover personal illness, personal business and bereavement according to the following formula: 2 work days per week = 2 days per year; 3 work days per week = 3 days per year; 4 work days per week = 4 days per year; and 5 work days per week = 5 days per year.

- Health insurance: Teachers who work 18 hours or more per week are eligible for a subsidy of \$175.19 per month, or an annual cash option of \$500.

Adult education classes, under the direction of Terry Klenczar, are based out of the Farmington Community School and Farmington Training Center.

Zurvalec said the department has rebounded from state budget cuts in 1995. Classes are well-attended. "We're managing to continue a very strong program," she said.

Detroit man charged in pair of Shell gas station hold-ups

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A Detroit man, 37, has been charged in two recent Farmington Hills gas station robberies.

The man was arraigned on one count each of armed robbery and unarmed robbery in connection with two hold-ups at Shell stations Nov. 16 and Nov. 19.

A robber made off with \$300 cash after placing an attendant in a headlock at the Shell on 12 Mile and Middlebelt Nov. 16. The same man is believed to have stolen \$200 cash after pulling a knife on a clerk at a station on 12 Mile and Orchard Lake Nov. 19.

Judge Maria Parker set bail at

\$50,000 cash surety at the man's arraignment in 4th District Court Nov. 25. Preliminary examination is 8:30 a.m. Monday.

Farmington Hills police arrested the man in the 11 Mile and Middlebelt area. Police had him under surveillance in Detroit after witnesses provided a license plate number and a description of the vehicle involved in the robberies.

"There is always the question, 'Do you watch until another act is committed? Or, do you take him down as soon as you can?'" said Sgt. Tim Swanson, Farmington Hills police. "Our officers decided to arrest him as soon as they could because we didn't

want to risk anyone getting hurt."

The description of the robber's vehicle was a key to solving the case, Swanson said. Witnesses said the thief fled in a burgundy colored General Motors-type car with plastic across the back window.

With a plate number, police traced the owner to a Detroit address and waited to get a description of the driver.

The man charged is believed to be involved in a similar robbery in Oak Park.

If he is convicted, armed robbery carries up to life in prison while an unarmed count carries up to 15 years in jail.

Hills police commander's son remains in serious condition

BY MATT JACHMAN
STAFF WRITER

Police continue to investigate the school bus-minivan accident that severely injured a Stevenson High School sophomore Tuesday morning.

Mark Nebus, 15, remained in serious condition Friday at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor, a hospital spokeswoman said Friday. He suffered internal injuries when the minivan in which he was riding collided with a Livonia Public Schools bus at the intersection of Six Mile and Wayne Road.

With more witnesses coming

forward in the days since the crash, police had two more to interview as of Friday, said Sgt. Wes McKee, supervisor of the Livonia Police Department's traffic bureau.

The bureau should be able to wrap up its investigation this week, McKee said.

The accident took place shortly after 7 a.m. in wet road conditions. The driver of the eastbound minivan, Mike Nebus, a Stevenson junior and Mark's brother, was turning left onto Wayne when the minivan collided with the westbound bus, which had only the driver aboard.

Mark Nebus, in the front pas-

senger seat, and a backseat passenger, Stevenson junior Curt Pankuch, were taken to St. Mary Hospital in Livonia. Mark was later airlifted to Ann Arbor, while Curt was treated and released.

Mike Nebus and the female bus driver were not injured.

The teens were reportedly on their way to pickup another Stevenson student before heading to school when the accident occurred.

Mark and Mike Nebus are the sons of Commander Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department. The Nebus family lives in Livonia.

AGENDAS

Farmington City Council
City Hall, 474-5500
8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 1

Agenda items include:

- Presentation of Downtown Development Authority draft for 10-year improvement plan.
- Request for fence variance, Our Lady of Sorrows Church.
- City manager's report on Public Safety Department renovation analysis.
- City manager's report on 1998 County Tri-Party Program.

■ Consideration to renew membership in Michigan Municipal League.

■ Appointment to Beautification Commission.

Farmington School Board
Schulman Building,
489-3300
7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 2

Agenda items include:

- Recognize William Grace Elementary School Principal, Katy Hill, recipient of MEMSPA Leadership Award; Athletic

Director Ronald Holland, National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Michigan Chapter; Farmington High School as a Michigan Exemplary School.

■ Review of 1998-99 budget parameters and timelines.

■ Superintendent's report: Participation in Oakland Schools Substitute Employee Management System; Mission 2007 study report, elementary school restructuring.

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