

Community-style Stats show program's rewards

Not everyone will get a chance to visit Chief Bill Dwyer's office to see the heavy glass statue awarded to the city of Farmington Hills for its Community Policing programs.

No matter. The trophy isn't as important as what it symbolizes. The Farmington Hills Police Department was honored by the National League of Cities for its 39 programs that involve and serve the people who live and work in the city.

The police department was honored for taking active steps to try to make things safer in this community, and succeeding. Residents should be happy with the results, too.

Of course, it could be just good timing or a thriving economy, but Farmington Hills officials proudly credit the Community Policing programs as they report a 14 percent decrease in crime so far this year and a 25 percent

decrease in burglaries through September.

The NLC judges were impressed that the community policing programs is so comprehensive, utilizing the entire community from senior citizens to children. Things like bicycle patrols, volunteer handicapped parking patrols, teaching crime prevention techniques for schools, businesses and neighborhood groups, attacking apartment crime issues and allowing patrol officers to cover a steady beat do not seem to be exactly groundbreaking moves in the world of law enforcement. But when you look at them as a whole and spread them among all the age groups, it appears to be a shift of focus from the detached cop in the squad car responding to crime to a more involved role.

And, when you can show that these efforts have a tangible result in crime statistics, you really don't need to see the trophy.

Volunteers make season special

It's the time of year for volunteers to serve the needs of the less fortunate in our community. And it's worth saluting the impressive efforts going on around town.

Of course, the Farmington Area Goodfellows' project is among the largest, joining up with the local schools this year to gather 27,418 cans of food — which is nearly one can for every foot in the third highest peak on Mt. Everest.

The Goodfellows stockpiled their goods at a warehouse on Eight Mile and then put together an army of volunteers Saturday to deliver care packages of food and gifts to around 250 seniors and families who were screened for need. Beside the obvious benefit of helping the needy, many of the young volunteers admitted the service opened their eyes to the level of

poverty in some parts of their community.

Smaller drives are going on all around town — churches working to help deliver survival packages to homeless veterans, clubs gathering funds to put on dinners for the less fortunate, public employees and private firms hosting toys for tots, food and even mitten and hat collections, etc.

People who take time out to serve their neighbors, whether during these extra busy holiday season or other times of year, certainly deserve recognition.

We've tried to cover as many as of these efforts as possible because they're important to the fabric of what makes our community special. And, while we can't know about or cover them all, we commend the folks behind them.

Caution the key to safe holiday

The holiday season is upon us and we remind homeowners to exercise caution and common sense in decorating, cooking and traveling to and from holiday celebrations.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, nearly 600 fires per year have been started by the ignition of Christmas trees, causing an average of 33 deaths, 117 injuries and \$23 million in property damage.

Be especially careful when decorating. Purchase laboratory-tested Christmas lights, unplug tree lights when leaving home or going to bed and use common sense when decorating with candles.

The Southeastern Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross offers the following 12 tips to help Wayne and Oakland county residents prevent injuries or even fatalities this holiday season.

- Beware of holiday candles: Be sure candles are kept away from decorations or other combustible materials. Don't leave children in a room with lit candles, and always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, out of the reach of children. Never use candles to decorate a Christmas tree. Never display lighted candles in window or near exits.
- Test tree trimmings: When decorating with lights, be sure to purchase only those approved by a testing laboratory. For outside decorations, use only those lights approved for outdoor uses. Don't overload electrical outlets and always unplug all lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Keep Christmas trees fresh: Choose a fresh Christmas tree and secure it in a sturdy stand. Place the tree away from heat sources and exits and water it daily. If you purchase an artificial tree, make sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.

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- Inspect fireplaces: Have your chimney inspected by a professional and cleaned if necessary. Creosote, a chemical substance that forms when wood burns, builds up in chimneys and can cause a fire if not properly cleaned. Never use flammable liquids in a fireplace. If you plan to hang stockings on your fireplace, do not use the fireplace for fires.
- Buckle up: During the holiday months, people travel more than ever. Wear a seat belt and make sure all passengers buck up. Remember to seat children 12 and younger in the back seat of the car. Children under 40 pounds must ride in approved safety seats in the back seat.
- Cook with care: When cooking, always turn pot handles in. Don't store items on the stove top, they could catch fire. Don't overload electrical outlets and don't use appliances with frayed or cracked wires. Turn off kitchen appliances after use.
- Be cautious with portable and space heaters: Place space heater at least three feet away from anything combustible, including clothing, pets and people. Never leave space heaters operating when you are not in the room or when you go to bed.
- Prepare a winter storm plan: Have extra blankets on hand and ensure that each member of your household has a warm coat, gloves or mittens, hat and water-resistant boots. It's also important to have your car winterized.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 YEARS AGO — DEC. 19, 1957 (ENTERPRISE)
Farmington officials voted to approve a new business license ordinance. Starting the first of the next year, businesses would be required to register with the city, paying fees ranging from \$5 to \$100, with most falling in the \$10 to \$25 range. Only one license was required for a business owner with more than one related business.

25 YEARS AGO — DEC. 20, 1972
Farmington Township residents will vote on whether to incorporate as a city on May 8. The charter commission most recently agreed to set up a seven-person city council.

2 YEARS AGO — DEC. 18, 1995
Harrison High School's Mark Phillips was selected as Michigan School Band & Orchestra Teacher of the Year for Oakland and Livingston counties. He directs roughly 210 students in the school marching and concert bands, orchestra, symphony and jazz bands.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
Will the Detroit Lions make the playoffs?



"I don't care or know anything about it."
Larry Hall
Farmington



"Sure — piece of cake!"
Bill Frisby
Farmington Hills



"I don't really follow football, but I think they have a shot."
Ellen Glynn
Livonia



"Yes, I do (think they will). They're improving."
Ray McDonald
Harbor Springs

We asked this question at Big Apple Bagels.

LETTERS

Stop cable rate blah-blah

Once again, we are exposed to the blah-blah blahs after which we are expected to roll over and play stupid like any good rate payer. I make reference to the article explaining why we are now going to get a 10.1 percent increase in our cable rates. This is in addition to the overcharge of 65 cents per month that the FCC has already ruled Time Warner is billing us.

Time Warner claims the increase is "mainly" due to Mr. Rupert Murdoch, owner of Fox Sports, not allowing his channel to be carried as a premium channel as PASS used to be. I think Time Warner should tell Fox Sports where they can put "their" channel. This ransom will cost me \$1.26 more each month, even though I don't want it. Time Warner then goes on to say they will lose \$9.95 subscription fee from PASS subscribers (but they don't say they will make it up with the additional fees from all customers). If a broad assumption is made that Time Warner made money with PASS and they will make money with Fox Sports and both were to cost Time Warner the same, you are looking at a ratio of seven non-viewers to one viewer for the sports program. If Time Warner would be faced with a room full of people for not having the channel, he should have seven rooms full of people objecting to having to pay for the other rooms entertainment.

The blah-blah goes on and on. Our Farmington Hills mayor, Mr. Vagonzzi, said he is trying to generate public interest in such increases by cable companies. The only thing that will stop this nonsense is to get competition into our area. Give us service from Ameritech or some other choice then see how many of us storm Time Warner's blah-blah centers about their programming and rates.

Kenneth Griffin
Farmington Hills

Don't subsidize developer

A developer wants to put a Super Kmart shopping center and multiple family development on 78 acres at the congested Orchard Lake and 14 Mile Road intersection in Farmington Hills. The plan is to replace the present Kmart with a half-a-million-square-foot retail complex, anchored by a 24-hour Super Kmart. In addition, up to 250 condominiums or other multiple housing units would go in next to it.

Across the street, West Bloomfield is considering a Florida developer's proposal to build a 65,000-square-foot retail center and several large office buildings on 53 acres on the northwest corner of Orchard Lake and 14 Mile.

One could question the wisdom of elected officials in both communities if they approve two high-density developments which inevitably will add volumes of traffic to the already overburdened roads in that area (especially when we don't have a solid commitment from MDOT that necessary improvements will be made — now only about half the needed funding is appropriated).

Whether you're for or against the proposals,

you should be aware that the Super Kmart developer is asking Farmington Hills for a tax break to pay for the development. As reported in the Dec. 4 Observer, the developer "needs extra money to buy existing residential property that is going for much higher commercial prices." They are floating a number of tax relief proposals, such as a DDA or a TIF, or an EDC, which could also involve city road improvement funds. What all of these alphabet soup schemes have in common is that the city's tax revenue would be used for the benefit of the developer to cover acquisition or other costs.

When people get wind that the city is considering tax abatements that would funnel public money into the pockets of private developer, they are not going to like it. In the first place, we don't need that kind of "corporate welfare" in Farmington Hills — we have been able to attract and retain quality businesses without it. Second, if the people who own the property needed for the development can get windfall profits from selling, that's fine — but not if the profits are paid for by the rest of us with our tax dollars. Third, under the Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance, the developer is supposed to get special zoning in exchange for providing a benefit to the community. Where is the benefit if the road, drainage, or other improvements which the developer should be contributing are actually paid for by the city?

Whether or not it is good planning to put in all of this development where the roads and drains already are overflowing, our city government should not be subsidizing private profits.

Andrew Nickelhoff
Farmington Hills

Spend on seniors, too

To Philip Power: I read your news article "Prison priorities need fixing" and would like to take this time to give you another view — mine! You said Michigan spends \$53 per day on a prisoner — Ohio state \$37 per day. What I want you to see is our senior citizens are allowed less than \$30 per day from our government through Social Security for life — and I must add — we have to fight for that! This is not fair! Our prisoners should not be allowed more money to live than our good citizens.

Group housing should be considered as a way to house our prisoners — it could prove to be a better and less expensive way to remove crime from the streets — also we could find living in group housing may be better for the rehabilitation of a criminal.

The Detroit News stated Feb. 18, 1997, that Michigan may receive \$14 billion dollars from the tobacco companies as compensation for the pending lawsuit we have against them. Hopefully, Gov. Engler won't take the tobacco funds and use it on roads and prisons — you can be sure if we don't acquire some better candidates to run against him than we have now — there is a better than good chance he will be our next governor.

Margaret Prucha
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power