

CHAT ROOM



Jennifer Hoemke

Queen says thanks to two communities

I would like to say thank you to the many people who have touched my life these past few years. Being crowned Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills on July 9, 1997 gave me the chance to not only give back to the two communities what they gave to me through my educational experience, but to help enrich those programs already in existence.

During the past four months I have been busy promoting my platform which is very near and dear to my heart. Creativity, achievement, and teamwork through theatre technique or CAT is a touring arts education program I began last year. My goal is to educate students in grades K-12 about the benefits they will receive from arts education. By actively involving students in theatre techniques they are able to experience the benefits they'll derive from this practical application, and to relate to how these skills can be channeled into their academic studies.

I'd like to thank Duncle Middle School's choral program, East Middle School's O.M. Team and Langdon Elementary for allowing me the opportunity to present my program.

During this first quarter of my reign as Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills, besides promoting my platform I've

Please see CHAT ROOM, B2

Videos offer ounce of prevention

■ Home and fire safety are his forte as a former firefighter launches a new career in video production.



By MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

As a member of the Farmington Hills Fire Department for seven years, John Zylka taught community classes on fire safety, first aid and CPR, and a popular babysitting course he developed on his own.

"I loved public education. There is a longing out there for safety information," said Zylka, who left the force last year to launch SafetyTech, a home safety business, which he operates out of his Plymouth Township home.

Since last summer, he has produced a series of three videos: Home Emergencies, Safe Babysitting, and Making Your Home Safe for Children. They are available in both Farmington public libraries and can be purchased separately or as a set. Two more videos are in the works for release later this year.

The next one, Fire Smart, the Ultimate Lesson, will feature a controlled house burning in Farmington Hills to be conducted in late February or March.

"Chief (Richard) Marinucci has been a huge help," Zylka said.

The video will focus on every aspect of a house fire, from the actual burning, to the emotional impact on the family, to rehabilitation of burn victims at the University of Michigan Burn Center.

Zylka's own experience as a firefighter has shown him how many house fires can be avoided.

"People underestimate how necessary smoke detectors are," he said. "I suggest one in every room, especially in bedrooms where children sleep."

But he warns that they can cause a false sense of security.

"I've been in house fires where the



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARMICHAEL

Home office: John Zylka reviews rough footage from a controlled house burning, part of which is included in his videotape on fire safety. The former Farmington Hills firefighter launched a video production company last year.

homeowner had working smoke detectors but the sensing unit was clogged with spider webs or insects," he said. "The test button works when pressed, but the sensor may not detect smoke if it's clogged. Vacuum it."

Zylka recommends changing smoke detector batteries annually, or buy the new 10 year lithium batteries. He says detectors are only good for 10 years anyway. After a decade, throw them out and buy new ones.

"What I encountered most on emergency runs was the attitude that 'It can't happen to me.' In many cases, the fire could've been minimized or prevented."

For instance, a pot burning on a stove could be extinguished by simply turning off the stove. Grabbing a hot pot will result in burned hands and possibly spreading the fire to the kitchen floor. His tips: keep small appliances unplugged when not in use,

plan a good escape route in case of fire, and go over it with all family members.

"Kids are usually better at this than adults. They're great safety learners," he said.

Zylka's oldest daughter, 11-year-old Deanna, reminded him to check the small appliances recently and he was surprised to find a plugged in hot glue gun in the basement.

Another big issue is carbon monoxide

Please see VIDEOS, B2

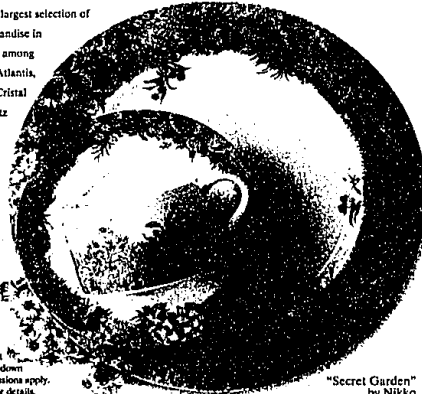
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