

Sunday
January 11, 1998

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Farmington Observer

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HomeTown
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

VOLUME 111 NUMBER 31

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 66 PAGES • <http://observer-occentric.com>

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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THE WEEK AHEAD

SUNDAY

Film fun: Matinee showings of "The Rainmaker" and "Air Force One" start at 3 p.m. today at the Civic Theatre in Farmington.

MONDAY

Art start: Meet artist John Glick - whose ceramics exhibition runs through Feb. 28 - during a reception at 6:30 p.m. in Farmington Hills City Hall. The city council meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Key spike: Harrison High plays host Walled Lake Central in a girls volleyball contest at 6:30 p.m.

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CO leak fuels call for detectors



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A possible case of a Farmington Hills family being poisoned by carbon monoxide underscores the need for detectors and periodic appliance inspections, a Farmington Hills fire official said.

A large bird's nest in a furnace duct is believed to have led to a carbon monoxide leak, which resulted in four people being taken to the hospital Wednesday.

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless and odorless poison, which can cause flu-like symptoms. Of 6,000

deaths caused annually by CO poisoning, 60 are attributed to malfunctioning appliances, according to the Gas Resource Institute.

In this case, the home didn't have a carbon monoxide detector.

"The lesson to be learned is that carbon monoxide detectors are a good idea and people periodically have to have their appliances checked," said Stephen Hume, Farmington Hills fire department spokesman.

At 4 p.m., Farmington Hills firefighters from Station 5 were called to a Tulane Street home after residents there complained of an odor inside.

An initial monitor revealed one part of the home had a carbon monoxide

reading of 1,500 parts per million; A reading of 9 PPM prompts fire department action, Hume said.

The occupants were evacuated. One family member had been in the home four hours; the others for two hours before firefighters arrived.

"They were symptomatic and there were high carbon monoxide readings within the home," Hume said.

They were then taken to Botsford Hospital while firefighters and Consumers Energy staff ventilated the home. Family members were treated and released.

Investigators discovered a nest blocking a six-inch vent stack, which is believed to be a contributing factor.

The nest was packed in a cylinder and was a foot high.

A lifted-cap covered the vent stack, but birds were still able to nest inside, Hume said.

"Once the bird's nest completely blocks it, then the appliances themselves soot up and they get completely packed with soot and will not vent," Hume said.

"We cleared the bird's nest, the boiler was tagged as out of service until it could be properly serviced."

On a follow up visit Thursday, firefighters discovered the home still had carbon monoxide reading of 150 PPM and instructed the occupants to evacu-

Please see DETECTORS, A2



family business

Family-run businesses are a staple of our local economy. More than 50 percent of corporate entities in North America are family-owned, and produce more than half the gross national product.

Today's Observer takes a look at local families who continue to foster the entrepreneurial spirit that makes America great.

The families featured today also represent those who have beaten the odds and made it to at least the second generation. Many analysts believe the success rate for family businesses ends with the first generation.

"Seven out of 10 family businesses fail to get to the second generation," said Scott Friedman, an attorney and co-author of "How To Run a Family Business." "That figure can be attributed to the business dissolving, family conflict or the business spinning off. Of those remaining, only one of every 10 makes it to the third generation."

Family business has their share of successes and problems. Inside today's paper, experts offer tips and information on how to handle the problems unique to the small family-owned business.

We hope you enjoy reading about the families that make up the fabric of our local hometown business community.

—Susan Roelke, managing editor



Working together: Bowlers have been bowling strikes and spares for 28 years at the Winkels' family-owned Bel-Aire Lanes on Orchard Lake south of Ten Mile. Brothers, Dan (left) and Mike now run the thriving business which is open every day and employs about 14 people.

Inspiration drives businesses

BY MEGAN SWOYER
SPECIAL WRITER

For two Farmington-based businesses, the phrase family-owned means success. Bowlers have been bowling strikes and spares for 28 years at the Winkels' family-owned Bel-Aire Lanes.

Meanwhile, the customers of Farmington's Bon Ton Shoppe, which now is located at Farmington Road and Grand River, have been purchasing the Wingers' charming and unique goods since 1961.

Surprisingly, both of the businesses' owners say that their beginnings weren't what anyone would call "business-like." No strategic plans, competitive analyses and profit projections for these owners, a lot of their early inspiration and drive was based on pure hunch and human desire.

The Winkels' business history begins in Detroit at a dry-cleaning plant.

In 1970, Bill Winkels, now 68 and retired, and his brother, both owners of

Luster Cleaners on Plymouth Road, decided that they wanted to get into the bowling business. Little did they know that bowling would become the No. 1 participation sport in the United States. The two were running a dry-cleaning plant that was passed down to them from their father.

New adventure

Knowing nothing about bowling, Bill's

Please see INSPIRATION, A3

Enthusiasm helps nursery to build, grow

BY MEGAN SWOYER
SPECIAL WRITER

You could say that Fred Steinkopf's business philosophy is a play on words. Focusing on growth, the owner of Steinkopf Nursery and Garden Center in Farmington Hills lives by the motto: Always let enthusiasm grow. Pardon the pun, of course.

Allowing his offspring and other employees to immerse themselves in what makes them happy is what business is all about for the 65-year-old Steinkopf.

"My father (Fred Sr., the founder of the nursery) used to tell me to never break down enthusiasm," said Fred during a break from a busy morning last month selling Christmas trees.

Steinkopf's father knows all about enthusiasm. In the 1920s, he worked for



Family effort: Fred and Sharon Steinkopf, owners of Steinkopf Nursery and Garden Center in Farmington Hills.

different nurseries in Rockwood, Mich. One day in 1931, one of the owners told him the company was going bankrupt and offered him the opportunity to buy some of the trees. So he and his brothers dug up the trees and brought them to Farmington Township (now Farmington Hills).

"And they're in business," recalled

Please see GROWING, A3

Experts offer advice, tips

BY MEGAN SWOYER
SPECIAL WRITER

Conflicts within family businesses are inevitable. Many a former employee who quit his or her job has shared numerous stories about how he or she couldn't watch the company soap opera one more day.

There was the boss' son who hurled a stapler across the room at his inept receptionist, who happened to be his father's fiancée. Then there was the co-owner mother who never saw anything the same way as her co-owner husband did.

Various tiffs and spat are bound to arise within the family and around it. But it's not all bad. In fact, says Charles Soberman, a lecturer at Wayne State University's

Please see EXPERTS, A4

Good fences, neighbors still need permits

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Greg Hahnfeld thought he was doing the right thing.

One weekend last May, the Farmington resident tore down an old, worn-out stockade fence around his home on Violett and put up a 6-foot cedar fence. The new fence was attached to the existing poles. Everybody in the neighborhood, including his next-door neighbors, couldn't be happier with how the new fence has spiffed up their street.

End of story? Not quite. During last Monday night's Farmington City Council meeting, Hahnfeld and his wife Clara were required to plead their case for keeping the fence - something that would require a fence variance.

It seemed that Greg Hahnfeld's handy work, handsome as it was, violated several city ordinances.

"You try to do what's right," said Hahnfeld, a 28-year resident of the home.

Following a lengthy discussion, a compromise was reached that will enable the wood fence to stand tall. But both the Hahnfelds and their next-door neighbors will have to apply for a joint building permit and an abutting cyclone fence will have to be removed. The council allowed six months for the work to be done. The height of the wood fence will be allowed to remain at 6-foot, even though it exceeds city ordinances by two feet.

There were several reasons why Hahnfeld had to seek the variance:

■ First of all, the wood fence was put up without a permit.

■ Secondly, it abutted a cyclone fence on the property line shared by the Hahnfelds and their next-door neighbors, Patrick and Dorothy Pheny. The city ordinance strictly prohibits a "fence-on-fence" situation.

■ The fence also exceeded a 4-foot maximum height and was constructed with its supporting posts facing toward the Pheny residence, rather than toward Hahnfeld's. The placement of the posts didn't bother the Pheny. But it is still considered "a serious maintenance concern" in the city, said attorney John Donohue, who was sym-

Please see FENCE, A4

Back working? Not yet

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff is doing well after mid-December back surgery and is itching to return to his office around the end of January.

Spinal fusion was performed Dec. 19 on the lower portion of Lauhoff's back. Bone was taken from his hip and implanted into the vertebra in the operation at Detroit Receiving Hospital. The surgery was called "a success" by Lauhoff last week.

"Now it's a matter of recuperation," said Lauhoff, who is taking it easy at his Farmington home with his wife, Vicki.

According to Lauhoff, city manager for the past five years, following a long tenure with the Farmington Public Safety Department, the back had bothered him since his teen years.

"It was time to get it repaired, because it was starting to restrict what I could do."

FARMINGTON FOCUS

During his recuperation, he has been jokingly nagged by one of his two daughters, Cindy, a nurse at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills. The Lauhoffs' second daughter, Denise, attends Western Michigan University.

Lauhoff thanked residents who sent him notes and cards and the city staff for keeping things going smoothly during his extended absence. Assistant City Manager Bill Richards is handling the helm, but is in daily contact with Lauhoff. "The city's got a great staff," Lauhoff said. "They are super and keeping me informed about what's happening."

Anyone wishing to drop Lauhoff a get-well card or

letter should send it to Farmington City Hall, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, 48335.

Reaching the rainbow

Dr. Frederick Sampson, Pastor of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit, will be the keynote speaker at Thursday's third annual Rainbow Recognition Awards Breakfast at the William Costick Center.

The program, presented by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council, is scheduled to begin at 7:30 a.m.

The program will also feature awards for those "recognized for making significant contributions to multicultural understanding and advocacy."

Tickets (\$10) will be available at the door, but advance registration is encouraged. Call the Rev. Suzanne Paul at (248) 477-8548 for reservations.