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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Armed holdup: Workers at the Farmington Kmart faced a gunman in the second robbery in town within less than a week. /A3

COUNTY

Rough ride: Getting to work could prove difficult for those who rely on bus transportation; now that the Detroit Department of Transportation has cut routes to the suburbs. /A8

AT HOME

Extra help: A service started last summer works to help homeowners during building and renovation projects. /D6

ENTERTAINMENT

Theater: Wendy, Tinker Bell and the boy in green land at the Detroit Opera House in "Peter Pan." /E1

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Crash kills man, 81

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

An 81-year-old Farmington Hills man was killed after being struck by a delivery truck that ran a red light on northbound Haggerty and Nine Mile Tuesday, police reported.

The man, identified as Gurkirat Singh, was pronounced dead at the scene. He was driving his 1990 Buick LeSabre west on Nine Mile when it was broadsided by the delivery truck, which first struck a 1996 Mercury Villager van going east. The van subsequently clipped a 1992 Ford Probe. The driver of the Villager, a Livonia woman, was taken to Henry Ford Hospital in West Bloomfield where she was treated and released.

Witnesses said the truck disobeyed a traffic signal. Police arrested the driver, a Ruthven, Ontario man, 23. He is expected to be charged with negligent homicide, which is a misdemeanor that carries up to two years in prison if convicted.

"From what we've been able to ascertain, for whatever reason, he ran a red light," said Dennis Green, Farmington Hills police lieutenant. "That's what witnesses have told us."

Alcohol was not believed to be involved and all the occupants were wearing seat belts.

The traffic fatality is the first this year in Farmington Hills. Last year, three people died in accidents while eight were killed in 1996.

"We're not off to a good start this year," Green said.

Ice way to start the day



Stick handler: Mark Pietk of Farmington Hills works his way down the ice during pickup hockey Tuesday morning at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena. Below, skaters close in on the goalie.

Pickup hockey calls all careers, ages, genders

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The drop-in hockey game continued as 51-year-old Tom Vander Velde sat down on the bench and tried to catch his breath.

Vander Velde wiped sweat from his brow and raved about how the two-hour open sessions at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena provide an excellent way to mix exercise, sport and camaraderie.

"This is great because it's in the morning," said Vander Velde, a Waterford resident who works as a real estate agent. "Even a bad day is a good day, because you get a great workout."

Farmington Hills resident Mark Pietka, 41, echoed the sentiment of his teammate. "Vic Tanny couldn't touch this. Forget the treadmill."

Even though the game was played without officiating, the light-jerseyed team and the dark-jerseyed team competed hard — without incident. Players skated up and down the rink, firing shots



at the goalies, Sue Wise at one end and Ron Rogowicz at the other.

As is customary with open hockey, many goals are scored. When that happens, a player fishes out the disk and action starts going in the other direction.

Several players described the brand of play at Farmington Hills as "clean," and emphasized that

Please see PICKUP, A4

Hills faces pressure for tax break

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills finds itself pitted against an Indiana community for the affections of a multinational corporation. Residents could end up helping pay for the flowers and candy.

Hills-based Robert Bosch Corp. wants to expand and may leave for Grand Bend, Ind., where it recently bought Allied Signal. The Michigan Jobs Commission is proposing tax credits of \$30-\$40 million in order for the company to stay put.

The catch is the city will have to

kick in financial support for Bosch to qualify — more than likely a tax abatement.

Company representatives proposed a 12-year tax abatement — estimated at \$100,000 a year — to the city's Economic Development Corporation during a special meeting Jan. 7. EDC officials feel 12 years is too long.

Farmington Hills City Council members will consider the issue in a study session with Bosch officials 6 p.m. Jan. 26.

Bosch plans to build a 258,000-square-foot research and development facility at a cost of \$37 mil-

lion for its newly acquired braking division. The expansion is expected to create 200 new jobs.

Farmington Hills' council has been opposed to tax breaks, citing that residents are left to pick up the difference. Council members recently turned down a exit permit request by Hella North America to move to Plymouth Township in order to receive an abatement there.

Stakes are larger in this case, council members admitted. Bosch has six sites in Farmington Hills alone and 11 percent of its nearly

Please see TAXES, A2

New script for closed theater



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The ending to the Old Orchard Theater is apparently undergoing a change of script.

The three-screen cinema on Orchard Lake, north of 12 Mile, is reopening under new management.

At least that's the message on the marquee. And a worker inside Wednesday said it could be re-opened by the end of January.

American Multi Cinema Inc. announced in November it was shutting down three Detroit area theaters, including the Old Orchard. The theater had been open since the mid-1970s.

AMC reportedly sold the property to a Southfield company, which intends to operate the building as a cinema — at least for the time being.

A person from Arie-El Enterprises of Southfield met with Farmington Hills city officials to discuss possible options for the site, which is zoned for office but had a special use permit to operate as a movie house.

"We haven't heard from him since," said Ed Gardner, Farmington Hills city planner.

A representative at Arie-El Enterprises declined

Please see THEATER, A10

SAD tales

It's neighbor vs. neighbor in sewer, road changes

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Eli Pop and his neighbors have to ante up nearly \$12,000 for a sanitary sewer, or as he referred to it, "a damn sewer."

The 78-year-old Farmington Hills resident doesn't mind a sewer so much as the \$1,042 million cost, which includes the \$744,000 bid from the contractor to do the job. The rest includes engineering, contingency and administration. A majority of his neighbors in Greenacres subdivision requested the sewer and are willing to pay, though.

"We're under two rocks: Expand and have everyone pay; Or stay the way we are," said Pop, who is a retired engineer.

Farmington Hills City Council approved the project; Pop is obligated to fork over the money. Call it the price of democracy.

Special assessment districts, or SADs, are vying with death and taxes as certainities.

Special assessments are used by cities to pay for road paving, water and sewer improvements. The practice is seen as the most equitable way to appropriate costs for specific projects requested by residents.

SADs bring an equal amount of acrimony.

They stoke debates of urban progress vs. maintaining rural setting, needs as opposed to desires, and in particularly contentious cases, neighbor against neighbor.

Study time

Farmington Hills City Council members will look at SADs at an upcoming study session Saturday, Jan. 24. The move is prompted after successive hearings where residents and council members



Called for? Muddy holes mark this to-be paved stretch of Ridgewood Drive in Farmington Hills.

Please see SAD, A2

Planning a birthday bash

Farmington Hills' plans for its 25th anniversary are shaping up quite nicely, according to Jeff Stewart, co-chairman of the committee.

Stewart told the Interagency Council Thursday that the celebration will be on the last weekend in June. So far, they're planning a dinner/square dance for \$25 per person on Friday at the Costick Center. Saturday's events include a birthday cake ceremony honoring dignitaries and oldest residents and burying a time capsule at Heritage Park, along with a petting zoo, community bands playing and much more.

Committee members are also proposing a fireworks show at Founders Sports Park that needs city approval and they're looking for a group to host a classic car show on Sunday at the Costick Center.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Better late than never ...

Ten Korean War veterans from Patrol Squadron 731, a reserve squadron which drilled at Naval Air Station Grrosse Ile and was called to active duty in 1950, will receive their Distinguished Flying Crosses this Sunday afternoon in a ceremony at Leather Bottle in Livonia. It's one of naval aviation's top awards.

Commander Gary Dye, commanding officer of Navy Recruiting District Michigan, will present the crosses. Recipients include Mike McDonald of Farmington Hills and Ray Degroote of West Bloomfield. Recipients must have flown a minimum of 35 mis-

sions to earn the cross, which required Congressional approval.

Squadron member and ceremony organizer Bill Masser said the effort to secure the medals for the former flyers from Michigan began in 1979.

"The medals were earned in 1951. The Navy works in strange ways," he quipped.

A total of 287 men belonged to the squadron. They get together annually for reunions.

Class critters

Students at O.E. Dunckel Middle School recently collected 61 assorted stuffed animals for their "Operation Teddy Bear" program and presented them to the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

The stuffed animals will be distributed to young patients injured in accidents. Organizing the effort was Dunckel student Kimberly Poven.