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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Making the grade: The Farmington Public School District plans to revamp how district teachers are evaluated. /A3

COUNTY NEWS

OCC 'marketing': Sales and marketing are coming out of the classroom and into OCC's administration, in more ways than one. /A16

COMMUNITY LIFE

In store: The Discovery Shop run by the American Cancer Society has become an institution among downtown Farmington shoppers. /B1

SPORTS

Going to the mat: Farmington schools will compete with other area teams for the championship of the annual Observerland Wrestling Tournament Saturday. /C1

REAL ESTATE

Mushing through: Bad weather can pose problems in selling a few good homes. /F1

INDEX

■ Cable Connection	A13
■ Classified Index	H3
■ Autos	J6
■ Crossword	H6
■ Home & Service	J4
■ Jobs	H9
■ Real Estate	F1
■ Obituaries	A12, C8
■ Police calls	A4
■ Recreation news	A13
■ Sports	C1

Is gambling raid a portent of casino days?

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A Farmington Hills gambling raid might be a prelude of what's to come once Detroit casinos open for business, police say.

A total of 19 people were arrested in a joint sweep by uniformed and plainclothed police at an Arden Park Circle home Jan. 25. Officers confiscated \$25,000 cash, three handguns and impounded 11 vehicles in what appeared to be a gaming-type operation in the home.

Such illegal gambling is not likely to diminish with legal casinos opening soon in Detroit.

"I see a lot of people from metropolitan Detroit going to the casinos and gambling," Farmington Hills Chief Bill Dwyer said. "However, there is always going to be the illegal operations like you have now, though there are legalized casinos in Windsor."

"The illegal activity you see in some office buildings or homes ... it's a different operation."

When casinos open, illegal gambling is likely to actually increase in the suburbs, said Southfield police Chief Joseph Thomas.

"It's going to impact those cities with large hotels with restaurants," Thomas said. "We're going to have to increase patrols and police activities."

"Probably those of us bordering Detroit are going to be asking for more police officers."

The raid Sunday capped off a seven-

Please see RAID, A2

Hills weighs tax break for Bosch

Abatement would be city's first since '81

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



Whether it's through a tax abatement or through waiving costly fees, Farmington Hills City Council members want to work with the state to keep Robert Bosch Corporation here.

At Monday's meeting, the Hills council set up two public hearings for Monday, Feb. 9, in order to consider estab-

lishing an industrial district and, possibly, granting a tax abatement to the braking systems manufacturer. That's not going to be an easy decision, council members said.

Council members have a long-standing policy against tax abatements and, as of Saturday, some members were still adamant. But even the loudest of the tax abatement foes Councilman Terry Sever admitted, "This is a differ-

ent situation."

Said Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, borrowing a quote from a lawmaker: "Sometimes you have to rise above your principles and do what's right."

What's at stake are 700 existing jobs and the creation of 210 to 300 new ones with an addition of a 258,000-square-foot research and development facility on Hills Tech Drive.

The city would capture \$600,000 a

year in industrial facility taxes during the abatement and \$1.2 million annually after the tax break, a Bosch attorney said.

Robert Bosch Corporation needs the city to contribute - either through a direct tax abatement of \$400,000 or \$1.5 million in other incentives - in order to qualify for \$30-\$40 million in tax credits from the state.

The state Jobs Commission offers the incentive through its Michigan Eco-

Please see TAX, A2

'Stay low'



STAFF PHOTOS BY DEAN MERTZEL

Safe level: After lighting a fire in a house, Farmington Hills firefighters, along with reporter Larry O'Connor on knees at right, stay below the ceiling of smoke as the training team outside prepares to put out the blaze.

Training exercise fans flames of fire survival

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When it comes to smoke and flames, it's better to heed the sagely advice of the Frankenstein-esque character portrayed by "Saturday Night Live's" Phil Hartman, who comically grunted: "Fire ... bad."

How true, but there is nothing funny about the real thing.

That becomes clear when 1,200-degree heat and choking black smoke hovers overhead during a fire department training burn at a soon-to-be demolished home on the north side of Grand River Avenue, west of Drake.

The Farmington Hills department uses such deliberately-set blazes to put firefighters through their paces. Three to five such exercises take place annually, which are conducted under National Fire Protection Association guidelines.

Owners donate houses or businesses that would otherwise be demolished, saving them the cost of leveling the structure because "there's not

much left when we're done," said Mike Kish, Farmington Hills fire inspector.

The home on Grand River is being razed to make way for an assisted living center. Two firefighters would use the training to fight a blaze on the front line.

"It's mainly to sharpen the firefighter's skills," Kish said. "Being out in the suburbs, not all the firefighters get a chance to get on the nozzle and be the first suppression line inside."

Such training burns also gave outsiders a glimpse of what they typically encounter.

On Monday morning, department personnel used the former living room area in the two-story home to illustrate the ferocity and swiftness with which a simple fire house spreads. A cable TV crew, newspaper photographer and a reporter - who was in full firefighting gear - were invited to watch.

Kish showed the group other rooms that have been burned. A door is completely charred, a result of the intense

heat produced by fires in paneled rooms.

"And guess what room you're going to watch burn today? Why it's paneled, too," Kish said devilishly.

A few minutes later, Fire Marshal Stephen Hume used a propane torch to ignite a pile of debris, which included wood panels and, ironically, copies of dated fire reports.

From a few feet away, Assistant to the Chief Bob Rebtov and a visitor - thinking he's being used as a human marshmallow - watch the flames prance harmlessly in the corner. The ritual suddenly strokes up the wall and flames start licking the ceiling.

"Stay low," urged Rebtov, crouching near a couch.

Plastic blind panels start to peel off like the skin of a banana from the searing heat. A window pops near



Sparked: Fire Marshal Stephen Hume uses a gas torch to light a pile of wood debris in the corner of the living room of a house on Grand River, being used for a series of training exercises.

the source of the blaze.

The room's ceiling is quickly replaced by a layer of clearly-defined smoke. While kneeling and looking sideways, the blaze remains center stage.

"Hold your hand up," Rebtov said. "Feel the heat?"

Against the heat, a gloved hand suddenly feels like an oven mitt made of cheesecloth. As the blaze spreads, observers are ushered to an adjoining room near the front door.

"Watch the couch," said Rebtov where he'd been seconds earlier. "It's

Please see FIRE, A2

Celebrating a heart

Yes there will be hearts and flowers for Frank and Phyllis Maykovich of Farmington Hills this Valentine's Day.

A four-year wait for a heart for Frank, who suffered from cardiomyopathy, a degenerative disease of the heart muscle, finally came to an end last weekend when the 63-year-old toolmaker received a donor heart in transplant surgery at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital.

"I was stunned. I couldn't speak," said Phyllis when she learned a heart was available for her husband of 20 years. "We had waited such a long time. It's like winning the lottery."

The couple's six children (from earlier marriages) and seven grandchildren kept vigil with her Saturday. All were well and Frank is recuperating nicely. A co-owner of Boro Tools Corp. in Troy, Frank

FARMINGTON FOCUS

plans to walk out of the hospital in a couple of weeks.

"His strong faith helped him get through this," Phyllis said.

Surgeons told her the diseased heart they removed was enlarged to three times its normal size and quivered instead of beat.

"We are so very thankful," she said.

Phyllis says she plans to work aggressively to make more people aware of the need for organ donation.

"Only a very small percentage of the people who need hearts, lungs or livers are getting them," she

said. "The rest die waiting. I am going to do what I can to make more people aware."

Imageneering solutions

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chapter of the Optimist Club is sponsoring teams of fifth-graders from Our Lady of Sorrows, Eagle, Grace and Highmeadow elementary schools who will be among 60 teams participating in a problem-solving competition this weekend at Summit Place Mall.

The event, called Imageneering, is hosted by the Metropolitan Detroit Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute, Optimist Clubs of Oakland County and KNEX toy kits. Students are asked to construct a solution to a problem using a combination of household items and KNEX pieces.

Competition is 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, with the finals on Sunday.