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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Taxing questions: The Farmington and Farmington Hills boards of review host all-day sessions to hear property tax appeals at each city hall March 9.

TUESDAY

Meet the artist: Farmington Hills impressionist artist Gwen Tomkow will talk about her works at a reception 6:30 p.m. March 10 at Farmington Hills City Hall.

WEDNESDAY

Crime watch: Farmington Hills police crime prevention presents a seminar on how to stop internal theft at businesses from 9-11 a.m. March 11 at the William Costick Center.

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Car probed after crash hurts kids



By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Chrysler officials said a product analysis inspector found no mechanical defects with a 1998 Concorde that unexpectedly went into reverse and hit two North Farmington High students. A spokesperson from Chrysler said

the company routinely sends investigators to examine a vehicle — often at the customer's request — to see if there are any problems.

"We haven't spoken to him (product analysis inspector) directly; we just heard second-hand that the vehicle was inspected and there were, in fact, no

mechanical defects," said Michele Tinson, Chrysler spokeswoman.

At 3:40 p.m. Wednesday a 1998 Concorde driven by Sue Hoffman, 51, of Farmington Hills accidentally went into reverse instead of in drive, striking a 1993 Ford and students before crashing into the building.

Rachel Kasuboski of Farmington Hills was listed in good condition at University of Michigan Hospital Thursday. She suffered a broken pelvis, collapsed lung and a lacerated liver.

Stephanie Richmond, also of Farm-

ington Hills, was taken to William Beaumont Hospital where she was treated and released.

What prompted this car to go into reverse is not known, Farmington Hills police said. Alcohol was not involved, police said.

"(The driver) believes she had the car in drive and that's what she told us," said Lt. Dennis Green, who called the crash "a very unusual accident."

The driver, a teacher in the West Bloomfield district, was at the school to

Please see CRASH, A5

Their romance is a tale of federal disaster

By MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

No one ever thinks of a hurricane as a magnet for romance, but that's exactly what brought together one local couple.

Theresa Abler of Farmington Hills joined the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as a reservist in late 1994. This second career allowed the IBM retiree to use her administrative skills to help in the aftermath of natural or man-made disasters ranging from floods to fires, terrorist acts to ice storms.

Carl Becker III, a New Jersey businessman, had the same intention when he joined FEMA in 1992.

As reservists, Abler and Becker are called in on short notice to work anywhere the U.S. has declared a disaster area by the president, covering disasters from the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean to the federated state of Palau in the Pacific in addition to the 50 states.

The couple met in late fall 1995 in the aftermath of Hurricane Marilyn, which wreaked massive destruction off St. Thomas and St.

'We worked in Hamtramck and Detroit together after the tornadoes last summer and in Chicago for flooding.'

Carl Becker III
—FEMA reservist



Theresa Abler found love in the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Please see DISASTER, A2

200-plus apply for 45 spots at Highmeadow

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Highmeadow Common Campus principal Barbara Reams recalled conversations with teachers about how the elimination of "sibling priority" might impact this year's student lottery, which is Tuesday.

"One of the questions teachers asked was, 'Will there be enough interest in Highmeadow?' " if parents couldn't count on sending all their children to the same building, Reams said.

"But it looks like the numbers are going to be there."

The Farmington school board last year opted to do away with sibling priority — other than to "grandfather" it in for those with students at Highmeadow before the 1997-98 school year — because too many people were clamoring for too few openings.

With the school's 10th annual lottery all ready to take place at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Reams estimated that at least 200 parents have put their children's name into the bin.

Out of those, 45 will be picked to join the grades one-five school as first-graders in 1998-99. Another 15 siblings of current Highmeadow students (those who were enrolled before the board's decision) will also win slots.

Drawing the names will be a principal from another Farmington district school, Reams said.

There is another gauge about the interest: Last week's informational meeting about the lottery was standing room only.

"I said to parents, 'You're all winners,' because they'll have a great school no matter where they wind up," Reams said.

During the subsequent protests by residents and exploration of the subject by district officials, Reams remained neutral. She saw both sides of the issue.

"I see advantages to families being

Please see 200, A2



PHOTO BY JERRY MEDOGA

Kids stop, drop ... read

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Every afternoon at elementary schools in the Farmington district, students "Drop Everything and Read." But there is even more during "March Is Reading Month" to help youngsters develop the reading habit early in life.

At the top of the list is the Book Parade for fourth- and fifth-graders. Thirteen Farmington elementary are participating in the motivational program, which began Feb. 23 and continues through March 30. Last year, 1,642 of 1,775 fourth-

and fifth-graders participated, reading more than 10,000 books.

This year's list includes "Jim Dandy" by Hadley Irwin, "Mr. Lincoln's Drummer" by Clifton Wisler, "Terror at the Zoo" by Peg Kehret, "Cousins in the Castle" by Barbara Wallace and "If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon" by Ellen Levine. Levine, from New York City, will be the featured guest

author during school assemblies April 27-29. Students who read six of the 14 available titles will be invited to attend. A hardcover gift book will be presented to youngsters who complete 10 titles from the list.

"We want children to read for pleasure and for information," said Peggy Schmidt, the dis-

Please see READ, A2



Developer adds senior center to sweeten plan for new Kroger

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

To make a supermarket proposal easier to swallow, a developer is adding an assisted living center to the plan.

The question is: Will nearby residents and the city bite?

Selective Development Co. and the city of Farmington Hills are in court over the plan, which called for a 126,000-square-foot commercial development on Haggerty Road, north of Nine Mile. A 63,000-square-foot Kroger supermarket is the cornerstone of the development.

An assisted senior facility on the north side could reduce commercial development by 25-30 percent, which would help ease nearby resident worries about "domino" zoning, the developer said.

"The land is zoned office, but is listed as commercial in the city's master plan, which is how city planners view the area being developed in the future. When the zoning doesn't match the master plan, the developer must file a rezoning request."

In this case, the rezoning request was denied.

"Notwithstanding the legalities, we think this is a good site for commercial use," said Mike Horowitz, Selective Development Co. president.

"As in any situation, we're hoping there is an intersection where everybody can agree, short of a lawsuit."

Development officials pitched the idea to Farmington Hills City Council members at a study session Feb. 23. Council members suggested the developer involve residents, who are also worried about a new supermarket

Please see PLAN, A4

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Joining the circus

There will be exotic animals, clowns, high-wire acts and Jennifer Hoemke, Miss Farmington-Farmington Hills, singing the National Anthem at the Shrine Circus on Sunday, March 15, for both performances that day.

Hoemke will graduate from Wayne State University in May and will compete in the Miss Michigan pageant in June.

Band's date change

For the first time ever, according to Paul Barber, the Spring Concert by the Farmington Community

Band printed brochures with the wrong date.

Contrary to previous brochures, the concert will be held at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 29, at Harrison High School.

Nomination call

The Farmington Area Arts Commission is accepting nominations until March 16 for its annual Artist-in-Residence and the Distinguished Service to the Arts honors. The fields of art, drama, dance, literature and music are considered.

The Artist-in-Residence honors a resident of Farmington or Farmington Hills with a cash award, plaque and reception. The distinguished service award honors groups or individuals for support, promotion, management or teaching the arts.

Forms are available at the city clerk desks at Farmington and Farmington Hills city halls.

