

Sunday
March 22, 1998

Farmington Observer

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 111 years

HomeTown
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK
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VOLUME 111 NUMBER 51

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 68 PAGES • <http://observereccentric.com>

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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THE WEEK AHEAD

SUNDAY

The Cup: Lord Stanley's famed trophy will visit the Farmington Hills Ice Arena on Eight Mile Road west of Gill from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. today.

MONDAY

Signup time: The Farmington Public School District's adult and community education classes begin taking registrations today. Call 489-3300.

TUESDAY

Light it up? The Farmington school board will weigh adding lights to its high school football fields when the group meets at 7:30 p.m. March 24 at the board office.

WEDNESDAY

'On the homefront': That's the title of a talk on American Jews during the Civil War at Hillel Day School on Middlebelt at 8 p.m. today, March 25. Call 851-3220 for fee and other details.

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Inch, Webb to seek new terms on school board

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

It took Jack Inch a little while to decide whether to seek election to a sixth consecutive term on the Farmington Board of Education. But then, he thought it might be nice to stick around and see bond issue projects through to completion.

"The key word is consistency," said the 66-year-old Inch, chairman of the building and site committee. "I would like to finish up with it. It's kind of a task you'd like to complete."

And Inch said he has "a sneaking suspicion it will take three or four years to get it all done." Of course, the "it" is in reference to school expansion and improvement projects included in last September's successful \$93.1 million bond issue.

There is another reason Inch finally decided to go ahead with a re-election bid—even though he hasn't yet officially filed.

"I have a commitment to public education," he said. "It goes back to the fact someone taught me how to read ... (Education) has added so much excitement and a

Please see TRUSTEES, A6



Close check: Hazel Park Officer Mark Roettger leads a dog on the locker search at North Farmington High.

Drug dogs sniff lockers



BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The community war against drugs has some pretty sharp teeth to it.

On Thursday, in an effort spearheaded by Farmington Public Schools, trained police dogs sniffed out high school lockers in a hunt for illegal substances. Out of a total of about 4,800 lockers at Farmington, Harrison and North high schools, there was only one "hit," the term for a locker containing drugs, said Don Cowan, executive director of K-12 Instruction and Student Services.

A small plastic bag of marijuana was discovered in a locker at Harrison. Cowan said there were 10 so-called

"alerts," lockers with enough of a scent to get the dogs' attention but not containing actual drugs. Three dogs searched each high school, assisted by Farmington and Farmington Hills police officers and officers from Hazel Park police.

"It's really a spin-off of our whole (Call to Action) summit and proactive approach," Cowan said. "Considering the rise in drug use in this country, we're very pleased. One (hit) is too many, of course."

Present during the search was Estralee Michaelson, the district's coordinator of Student Assistance/Health/Family Life Education. It was Michaelson whose keynote

address at the Jan. 28 Call to Action Summit challenged different community groups to come together in a zero tolerance fight against drugs and alcohol.

"I absolutely think there was an impact made" by the search, said Michaelson. "It also sets us up for the future to do more searches at random. And we're doing this proactively, to maintain a safe and orderly environment for our students. We had some kids actually say 'Thank you.'"

Cowan said the district notified students and their parents at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year, and again in recent weeks, that there would be a randomly scheduled dog search. Students remained inside their classrooms throughout the 45-minute afternoon exercise.

According to the student code of conduct, lockers are district property and

Please see SEARCH, A6

Race cited in probe of fire at Hills pair's house

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO
STAFF WRITER

When former legislator David Honigman introduced a bill to combat hate crimes over a decade ago, he saw it as a trend occurring in bad economic times.

"When people aren't doing so well, they scapegoat some groups for their own problems," Honigman said. But in these good economic times, he was doubly astonished that a home which burned down in the ethnically diverse community of Orchard Lake had racial epithets sprayed on the interior. It was being built by a Farmington Hills couple.

"I am surprised because I don't live very far from Orchard Lake," the West Bloomfield resident said. "It's a very tolerant and very diverse community."

He described West Bloomfield and Orchard Lake as ethnic "melting pots."

The home, located on the 5000 block of Hickory Point Drive on the corner of South Bay Drive, was under construction and unoccupied when neighbors called in reports of a fire around 7:15 p.m. Wednesday.

About three hours later, firefighters had the blaze under control, but there wasn't much of the home left.

"Two walls on the garage were untouched," said William Brown, Tri City Fire chief.

And spray painted on the interior in several colors, were racial epithets, said Orchard Lake Police Chief David King, who would not release the exact content of the hate graffiti because of the ongoing investigation.

Please see FIRE, A6

Clowning is business, too



Getting connected: Tracy Walkowicz of SWOCC cable (left) hooks a microphone on Marilyn Knapp (Mare-lynn the clown) before an on-the-scene interview. At left, Corby Laverty of Magic Brain, a Farmington software company, works on a program while his father, Bill Laverty, talks with Ron and Laurie Gabrys of Farmington Hills.

750 sample a taste of our town

An estimated 750 people got the flavor of local cuisine and commerce at the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce's Taste of Farmington & Business Expo Thursday at the William Costick Center.

The overflow crowd—including visitors parking on the muddy field adjacent to the building—nibbled and

sipped their way through offerings of 14 area restaurants, while visiting booths of 75 businesses.

This year's new site drew more visitors than anticipated, according to Jody Soronen of the chamber.

Some vendors did run out of food. Still, Soronen said, "We had very nice comments from many people."

Crime hits record low

Farmington serious crime reports for '97 below 1974 levels

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

There were fewer serious crimes last year in Farmington than at any time since records started being kept in 1974, Public Safety Director Gary Goss reported to the city council last week.

"Many of our crime levels are at the lowest level we can remember," Goss said.

But police saw significant increases in drunken driving arrests and larcenies from automobiles, according to the public safety department's annual report for 1997.

Part One crimes dropped from 397 in 1996 to 372 in '97. Once again, there were no homicides in the city.

Other Part One categories and '96 to '97 comparisons that saw changes included: armed robbery, five down to three; criminal sexual conduct, four to three; aggravated assaults with weapons, 12 to one; stalking, four to 11; burglaries requiring force, 41 to 32; retail fraud (shoplifting), 49 to 30; and larcenies from buildings, 72 to 43.

Larcenies from autos went up from 45 in 1996 to 61 last year. A contributing factor to the increase is the theft of cellular telephones, often left out on a car seat or in plain view.

"The main target are the cell phones," Goss said to the council. "Don't leave your

Please see CRIME, A6

Botsford Inn rocks on

The historic Botsford Inn is alive and well, reported its proprietor. A diner speculated about the restaurant's future after finding the eatery closed at 8 p.m. on a recent night.

Groen Smith, who operates the historic inn, said there have been some cutbacks in staff in order to contain costs, but otherwise business is fine.

"Everyone has their ups and downs and this is a slow time of year for us; it's nothing unusual," Smith said. "It's the same old rock 'n' roll."

New Inn in town

The newest Inn in Farmington Hills opens its doors Monday.

The Fairfield Inn, just southeast of 12 Mile and

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Orchard Lake roads, opens its 91 rooms, including 12 with in-room whirlpool tubs. Rooms also offer large work desks, ergonomic chairs, telephones with dataport and voice mail, plus other business-related amenities.

Guests can also enjoy an indoor swimming pool and whirlpool spa, exercise room and complimentary continental breakfast.

Opening room rates start at \$69 for both weekdays and weekends. The inn is operated by Trans Inns Management Inc., a Farmington Hills based company that also operates the Best Western Exec-

utive Hotel and Suites in just down the street on 12 Mile.

Still looking

The city of Farmington Hills is looking for the top 25 oldest residents and those who have lived here the longest in connection with its 25th anniversary as a city. Residents 100 years old or over will also be recognized.

They will be recognized at noon Saturday, June 27, at Heritage Park, during a special ceremony marking the historic weekend of activities including concerts, fireworks, a petting farm and many more events.

To apply, or for more details, call Assistant City Manager Steve Brock at 473-9502.

