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THE WEEK AHEAD SUNDAY

Her day: Happy Mother's Day to all moms.

MONDAY

On the agenda: The Farmington Planning Commission meets at 8 p.m. May 11 at Farmington City Hall.

TUESDAY

Traffic talk: The Council of Homeowners Associations of Farmington Hills will meet at 7:30 p.m. May 12 at the main library on 12 Mile Road to discuss the city's traffic and mobility study.

WEDNESDAY

So long: Stop by between 4-7 p.m. on May 13 at the William Costick Activities Center to bid farewell to longtime Farmington Public Schools administrator Don Cowan.

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Farmington man to face robbery trial

The case of a Farmington man charged in the April 19 armed robbery of a South Lyon grocery store is headed to Oakland County Circuit Court.

Defendant Kevin Tod Alexander, 34, who was in the courtroom of 52nd District Judge Michael Batchik for Wednesday's preliminary examination, now awaits arraignment in circuit court on 10 charges linked to the robbery of Showerman's IGA. District court spokeswoman Joyce Renfrow said Batchik waived the case through to circuit court. Alexander remains in Oakland County Jail, with a cash bond of \$1 million, \$100,000 for each count.

Alexander's arraignment in circuit court will be 8:30 a.m. Thursday, May 21, before Judge David Breck.

Oakland County assistant prosecutor John Reiser and Alexander's defense attorney, Donald Williams, could not be reached for comment.

Alexander faces two counts of armed robbery, six counts of weapons felony firearm and two counts of felonious assault in connection with the South Lyon holdup.

The defendant also is a suspect in nine previous "closing time" robberies, including one in Farmington. According to Farmington

Please see TRIAL, A5

MDOT eyes I-696 exit by Inkster



Another exit on I-696, possibly near Inkster Road? State transportation officials are weighing those possibilities while city officials remain hopeful - but skeptical. The federal government must approve.

An additional I-696 exit between Telegraph and I-275 would speed up traffic and unclog bottlenecks at Orchard Lake and 12 Mile, Farmington Hills city officials have said.

The Michigan Department of Transportation agrees.

MDOT has filed an Interchange Justification Report with the Federal Highway Administration for a possible exit in the area of Inkster, somewhere east of Tyler and Franklin, an official said. A federal reply can take anywhere from three to nine months.

"We have to justify any change to an

interchange and get approval from the federal government," said Roger Safford, MDOT spokesman.

Such an exit is far from reality, but any news is good news to city officials, who have waited for the state to act on the issue. A recent Farmington Hills-commissioned traffic study cited the Orchard Lake, 12 Mile and I-696 as one of the most congested. One solution proposed includes adding an exit, possibly near Inkster Road.

"This is one of the most positive things we've heard," said Farmington

Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi.

Having only one exit between Telegraph Road and the city of Novi on the major thoroughfare creates headaches for motorists and public safety crews alike.

The situation has led to Southfield and Farmington Hills fire departments to form a mutual aid agreement. Southfield emergency crews respond to calls on westbound I-696 while Hills handles the eastbound side.

Otherwise, in order to respond to an

Please see I-696, A2



Smokes for sale: Hilda Kashat sells two packs of Kools to Dave Drazin of Bloomfield Township at the Mobil Oil gas station at Orchard Lake and 13 Mile.

New habits

Police urge tobacco sellers to card anyone under 27

Some 20 retailers who sell cigarettes and other tobacco products understood the message - don't sell to underage people.

The question is: Will it filter down to their employees?

Farmington Hills police conducted "Operation Tobacco Cooperation" in city hall May 1. Turnout included those who operate service stations, supermarket chains, pharmacies and liquor stores.

"There's a lot of confusion out

there," said Marie Lamont, manager of Mobil Oil on Orchard Lake and 13 Mile. "I think I learned a little bit about it."

The seminar is a follow-up to a Farmington Hills police sting in February where 20 retailers were ticketed for selling cigarettes to underage decoys.

In Michigan, it's against the law to sell any tobacco product to anyone under 18.

Those in attendance received

extensive information outlining the health risks of teens smoking and their role in helping prevent it.

Stickers informing customers about state law were also given to retailers to place on doors.

Similar enforcement has been used to deter underage alcohol sales, which has helped the number of violations diminish considerably.

Smoking carries the same addictive qualities as drugs and alcohol,

Please see SMOKE, A5

District MEAP scores jump

Parents in Farmington Public Schools welcomed news that Michigan Educational Assessment Program test scores for fourth and seventh graders are up 7 to 8 percent across the board in the district.

But they aren't getting carried away with glee.

"It's one measuring tool," said Andrea Ferriss, whose daughter Elizabeth attends fourth grade at Longacre Elementary School. "But there's a lot of pieces to the puzzle to let you know if you have a good school system."

"I like the idea that they're higher. I don't think it tells the whole story."

Although Longacre fourth-grade parent Anne Marie Pedersen said the MEAP improvement was nice, she isn't about to let results sway her view of the district's quality. Her twins Elizabeth and Nicholas took the test.

"I'm not worried about MEAP scores," said Pedersen. "You can be really bright and a bad test taker, too."

This year, with the test given in January instead of the beginning of the school year, 834 fourth graders and 850 seventh graders across the Farmington district outperformed last year's students in all four categories. Following is the breakdown, with percentages reflecting students scoring satisfactorily on the test:

- Fourth grade reading: 1997-98, 69.7; 1996-97, 62.7.
- Fourth grade mathematics: 1997-98, 64.8; 1996-97, 77.8.
- Seventh grade reading: 1997-98, 60.3; 1996-97, 52.9.

Please see MEAP, A5



Lineup of leaders: Accepting awards for volunteer work are Meredith Crawford (left) of Farmington High School and others during the Farmington Youth Assistance breakfast.

Kudos to youth volunteers

Kimberly Gass apparently can't get enough of helping other people and neither can the other young leaders who were honored Wednesday by Farmington Youth Assistance.

Nineteen youngsters in area middle and high schools, all of whom have spent many hours volunteering at soup kitchens, hospitals, churches and for charities, collected kudos and certificates at Farmington Youth Assistance's 10th annual Youth Recognition Awards Breakfast. The event took place at the William Costick Activities Center.

"She came with me in the morning to where I work (St.

John's Hospital in Detroit) and was stuck there all day long," said Kimberly's mom, Julie Griffith. "I say stuck. But I'd be ready to leave at five (p.m.) and she'd say, 'Can't we stay longer?'"

Kimberly, a Farmington High School sophomore, did everything from delivering flowers to moving patients around the floor in their wheelchairs to even visiting the sick and helping them order meals.

According to Griffith, Kimberly was "having so much fun she didn't know it was something she'd be honored for."

But Kimberly didn't mind being one of the award recipients. "I

feel very appreciated. I didn't really know it meant so much."

The honor also brought smiles to the face of Power Middle School eighth grader Rebecca York - as well as to the faces of her parents, David and Judy.

"It's a good feeling to have other people know that you're doing something good for your community," Rebecca said.

David York, a former Farmington school board member, said Rebecca "works hard, does a lot of different things, and it's nice to have her recognized. Hard work and achievement should always

Please see YOUTH, A6

Marryn' mayor

Yep, Farmington Mayor Mary Bush put down her meeting gavel and put on her "justice of the peace" persona Friday, performing the marriage of Mark and Connie Rice.

Bush said she had four different vows to choose from for the ceremony. The brief service took place at the couple's Farmington home.

Part of a mayor's job is to perform weddings, as long as they are within the city limits. "They contacted the city and got directed to me," Bush said.

Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi also officiates weddings in that city. "I wear this white shirt with a collar that makes me look like a priest," he said with a laugh.

Party like it's 1999

Look for an International Festival to complement the annual Founders Festival next summer.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Karen Bolen and Jim Hall, co-chairs of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/MultiRacial Steering Committee, told members of the Interagency Council Thursday about plans for a multi-ethnic festival featuring games, food and entertainment to be hosted at the William Costick Center during the summer of 1999.

School scoop

The soon-to-retire Mike Duff has meant a lot to the Gill Elementary School community over the years, and now it's payback time. An ice cream social and retirement party is scheduled 6-8 p.m. Friday, June 5, in the Farmington school's gymnasium and cafeteria.

The party is open to "anyone who knew him" during Duff's 11 1/2-year stint, said district spokeswoman Diane Bauman. Duff was featured in the Thursday, May 7, Farmington Observer. Those interested in making a gift donation should make it out to Gill Retirement Fund, Gill Elementary School, c/o Carolyn Rittner, 21195 Gill, Farmington Hills 48335. Call Fred Nasser at 477-0374 for more information.

Speaking of retirements...

Another respected Farmington Public Schools veteran, Don Cowan, is being honored by his friends and colleagues during a retirement party 4-7 p.m. Wednesday at the William Costick Activities Center, 28600 11 Mile.

Cowan is leaving after 35 years in the district, as a teacher, principal and administrator, most recently as the executive director for K-12 instruction and student services.