

Roots of remembrance



Growth through grief: Dr. and Mrs. Gary Vance stand with neighbors beside the tree planted in memory of their daughter, Toria Lin Vance. For a donation of \$150, the city of Farmington Hills will plant a tree in Heritage Park, on any other city-owned site, in memory of the person of your choice. Donors may specify the type of tree desired, as long as it is a species native to the park in which it is planted. In addition, a written memorial and photograph will be placed in the official Memorial Tree Book at the Visitor's Center at Heritage Park. The program was started in 1990 with more than 200 trees planted so far. For information, call the Department of Special Services at 473-9570 or George Morrow at 473-9530.

Plea for downtown grocer hits council, too

Approximately 45 of the 60 people in the audience at Monday night's Farmington City Council meeting were there because of the expected closing of the Downtown Farmington Center Farmer Jack grocery store.

Many of them are senior citizens, upset about the prospects of losing a store that is close to home. City Manager Frank Lauhoff said the city council assured them that they too are anxious to find out what the future might hold for the Farmer Jack — which is reported to be shutting down in late June.

"There was absolute consensus, everyone agrees a full-service grocery store is needed to serve senior citizens in the area, and (serve) everyone else," Lauhoff said.

About 12 people spoke to the council, and names, phone numbers and addresses of Kimco Corp. (the center landlord) and Greater Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company officials were distributed for them to call or send protest letters and petitions. A&P owns Farmer Jack.

"It was a very good example of what this community is about," Lauhoff said. "There were concerns presented in a reasonable manner. They were all there to find a solution."

"There's a lot of anxiety. Anytime something like this happens, people don't know what the result is going to be. We don't either."

Lauhoff noted the rumors a store shutting down have circulated for five years, and that city council members have "made it clear to Kimco that (they are) strongly in favor of maintaining a grocery store" in that location.

There is another Farmer Jack store at Farmington-Nine Mile roads, in the Crossroads Shopping Center.

"The city council ultimately has no control over what goes in there," Lauhoff said. "Kimco will make the final decision. But we want to make as strong a case as we can about what is important

to the community."

Lauhoff said the city continues to stress to Kimco that the city is "very much opposed" to any scenario where Farmer Jack would close — but continue leasing out the property so that a competitor could not move in.

As soon as the fate of Farmer

Jack is made official, Kimco and the city council will hold a joint meeting, Lauhoff said.

Officials hope that if another grocery store moves in it will meet the needs of senior citizens on fixed income as well as young families, Lauhoff said.

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"When you're coming east, there is nothing; When you're coming west, there is no market," said Kannelis, 43, who shopped at the Farmer Jack four to five times a week. "They need a market in downtown Farmington."

"That's one of the reasons we bought in downtown. We can walk to church, walk to school, walk to the movies and walk to the supermarket."

On Monday, a Kimco official said he's not heard from Farmer Jack about the store closing. "I hate to be a no comment person,

but I can't tell you anything," said Frank Deszenzo, Kimco leasing director.

If a new tenant has to be found, Deszenzo said they'd look to see what would be "the best fit."

"In order for us to maintain a viable shopping center down there, we have to offer the public what they want," Deszenzo said. "One of the main ingredients to a good shopping center is what we call merchandise mix."

"If that's what they want, that's what a good landlord will try to give."

Clarenceville won't join 'Durant II'

Clarenceville Public Schools will not join in a second "Durant-type" lawsuit to force the state to spend more money on mandated special education programs.

Instead of joining the second lawsuit, Superintendent Tom Tattan said Clarenceville will lobby lawmakers in Lansing to spend more money for state-mandated special education programs.

"We're still concerned that there are no constraints on special education costs," Tattan said. "They're going up higher than funding increases from the state, and that brings major financial implications to school districts. Programs were put into

law, and no one worried how they would be paid for."

Clarenceville was not part of the original, so-called Durant lawsuit, which involved only 84 Michigan school districts. Farmington's schools got back \$9.5 million from the state in the settlement.

Despite not joining the suit, Clarenceville still expects to get slightly more than \$1 million settlement from the first Durant suit. The money should come in two parts, one-half up front in November 1998, and the rest over the next 10 years, with the money coming from a state bond issue.

Clarenceville also has decided

not to sue the state in court to possibly get a bigger settlement from the first lawsuit.

At 7 p.m. June 11, the Clarenceville Board of Education will hold a public hearing to decide how the first \$525,000 in settlement money should be spent. The state requires a public hearing.

It is expected the money could buy some of the things the district needs: new buses, electronic gear and technology training, security, textbooks and building improvements and repairs.

The first Durant lawsuit claimed the state didn't fund state-mandated special education programs.

Reception honors Botsford teacher

A reception will be held 3:30-5 p.m. today, June 4, at the Botsford Media Center at Botsford Elementary School for teacher Patricia Winnie, honoring the many children's lives she has touched.

The school is at 19515 Lathrup off Seven Mile. The Botsford PTO hosts the reception for her former students, parents and friends.

Winnie moved to Livonia 29 years ago and has taught second grade for 40 years in the same school. She has also taught religious education at St. Genevieve.

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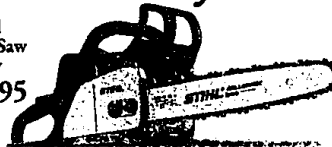
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