

Farmington Observer

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 111 years

HomeTown
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK
Putting you in touch
with your world

VOLUME 111 NUMBER 75

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 78 PAGES • <http://observer-ccentric.com>

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS
© 1998 HomeTown Communications Network, Inc.

Parents seek voice in 'block' plan



Parents of Harrison High School students say they weren't consulted over a proposed "block scheduling" plan. School officials say their plan isn't finalized, there's still time for input and they'll welcome parents.

The plan to roll out block scheduling in fall 1999 apparently has "struck a nerve" with more than the handful of Harrison High School parents who queried Farmington school officials during Tuesday's regular meeting.

Now it's up to the district to go about soothing their pain and anxiety - and officials promise they will try.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield said there will be ample time for parental

input between now and December or January, when details of the plan will have to be finalized in order to meet the fall 1999 timetable.

"We are committed to (having) parent seats on the planning team and student seats on the planning team," Maxfield said to the estimated 15 parents in the audience.

Before any proposal comes to the school board for final approval, added

Judy White, assistant superintendent for instruction, there will be "checks and balances" at every step. There will need to be public forums, a recommendation from the District Support Council and administrative endorsement.

But some parents maintain they wouldn't have been included at all if not for the subject being publicized at the recent school board candidates forum, co-hosted by the Farmington Democratic Club and district PTA council.

"As you know, the parents were not initially part of the decision-making process," said Harrison parent Beth Grossman, addressing the school

board. "We have been told since mid-May that we would be included in the implementation plan."

"However, all indications are that the decision has somewhat been made - at the teacher level. A vote has been taken and we understand that this plan will need to be presented to you ... This is why we're coming to you. We really want you to hear us very clearly, (about) what our concerns are."

At the top of their list of worries is whether the proposed four-by-four block scheduling plan would negatively impact students who are taking

Please see BLOCK, A2



DEAR OLD DAD

We received many heartfelt letters in our Mother's Day contest last month. Now it's time to remember those often-forgotten fathers.

We're asking anyone from Farmington or Farmington Hills to send us a short - maximum of 30 words - explanation of what makes his or her father special. The winner gets a pair of tickets to a Detroit Tigers game and fireworks show.

Get your entries to us by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18 - either via mail/delivery to our office at 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335; fax at (248) 477-9722; or e-mail at dvarga@cc.homecomm.net.

Please include your name, address, city of residence, telephone number and your father's name. Photographs are optional. We'll publish as many of the entries as possible.

Dave Varga
Farmington editor

THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Teed up: Mercy High School hosts its annual Meg Mallon Golf Outing June 15 at Sherandooh Country Club. 476-8020.

INDEX

Arts & Leisure/C
Autos/J1
Business/B45-6
Class. Index/E4
Crossword/EB
Health/D5

Jobs/H1
Malls/C8-7
Movies/C4
New homes/E3
Obituaries/A4
Police, fire/A4

HOW-TO REACH US

Newsroom: 248-477-5450
Newsroom Fax: 248-477-9722
E-mail: dvarga@cc.homecomm.net
Nightline/Sports: 734-953-2204
Reader Comment Line: 734-953-2042
Classified Advertising: 734-551-0900
Display Advertising: 248-901-2524
Home Delivery: 734-551-0500

Luigi's plan is to raise the bar

It took Dominic Belcastro five months to renovate Luigi's Trattoria to bring his Italian restaurant up to code after receiving a Class C liquor license from the state in December.

And, so far, so good since the first glasses of beer, wine and mixed drinks were poured last month at the downtown Farmington eatery. But, lamented Belcastro Thursday, customers now have another wait on their hands.

That's because a two-week, \$100,000 renovation to add tables and an alcohol service bar began yesterday.

With extra tables, Luigi's will be "more of a dining room," said Belcastro, who owns the Farmington Road restaurant along with his wife, Vivian. The latest project is expected to be completed around the July 4 weekend.

Response to adding alcohol to the menu has been very good, Belcastro said. Customers can only be served alcohol along with meals.

"It's going pretty good," he said. "It's picking up pretty good. Some (customers) are drinking and some are not. You have a choice."

After Belcastro found out from the state, "just before Christmas," that he had been given the go-ahead to serve beer, wine and mixed drinks, he began work on bringing Luigi's up to code.

"We had so many requirements to meet," said Belcastro, noting that the restaurant's bathroom facilities needed to be upgraded.

Luigi's was one of four Farmington restaurants to apply in 1997 for the special Class C license, as part of a program designed to strengthen central business districts in Michigan. Other entrants were seriously considered but have not yet been approved for licenses.

Pulling their strings



Stage magic: (Left) Lynette Aiken of Farmington Hills enjoys the first Summer Fun Series performance Wednesday with her children, Freddie, 2, and Natalie, 4. (Above), ventriloquist Richard Paul gets a hand from T.J., while making jokes underneath the tent in downtown Farmington, presented by NBD Bank. The series, sponsored by Farmington's Downtown Development Authority provides shows for kids every Wednesday through July 29. On June 17, it's Odd Boddins at 10:30 a.m. and noon at the Civic Theatre, presented by Dubin Optometric.

Anti-Semitic graffiti prompts reward

Farmington Hills police are trying to figure out whether the latest anti-Semitic graffiti incident - this one at Forest Elementary - is the work of adults or teenage vandals.

Meanwhile, a \$2,000 reward has been set up by the Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council of Farmington and Farmington Hills, Farmington Public Schools and the city of Farmington Hills for those who assist in solving the case.

Police have determined the inflammatory slurs spray painted at the northwest Farmington Hills elementary school are not related to an incident at Adat Shalom Synagogue last week. A representative from the Anti-Defamation League agreed after looking at photos of the latest renderings, which police say are more crude.

"The one at Adat Shalom totally focused on Israel and has an anarchist message; The other one does not," said

Don Cohen, director of the Michigan ADL Office. "They have nothing to do with each other."

"In terms of targeting Jews, with a large Jewish community in that area, they're looking to exert their own pride at the expense of others."

Aside from what's spawning such hatred, police want to find the culprit.

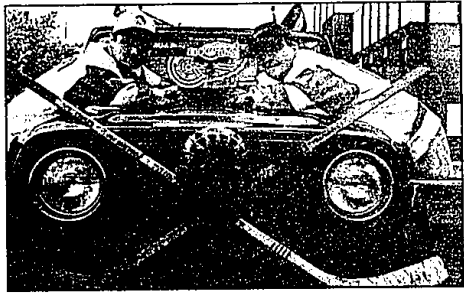
"Obviously, it's a major concern. We've had two incidents now," said Farmington Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer. "Even though they are unrelated, it becomes a priority in identifying these individuals involved."

Sometime between 11 p.m. Wednesday and 8 a.m. Thursday, vandals spray painted inscriptions on the north and west walls as well as a classroom window at the Farmington Hills elementary school.

Vandals wrote "Arabs & Armenians #1 God for Life" underneath the Forest

Please see GRAFFITI, A2

Driving for the Cup, II



Decked out: Kevin Lee of Farmington and his buddy, Chris Ryan of Livonia, get plenty of stares and honks in Lee's 1997 Jeep Wrangler - plastered with plenty of Detroit Red Wings decals and a rather unique bumper. Lee said one police officer even tripped on his siren to signal support.

K-5 science change aims to cut redundancies

The re-tooling of K-5 science curriculum in Farmington Public Schools is expected to get the go-ahead Tuesday night, but at least one parent isn't thrilled about the idea or about the timing of the decision.

School board members, at their 7:30 p.m. regular meeting Tuesday, will likely approve recommendations to "clean up" and streamline the elementary school science curriculum - reducing the number of topics taught in those grades, moving some of them to the middle school grades and attempting to minimize so-called "redundancies."

In other words, said Jerry Fouchey, director of curriculum and staff development, students won't be "encountering dinosaurs at three (different)

grades. It's a popular, fun topic. But it limits" other subjects, or benchmarks, that they can be learning about.

But wait, said Melody Jaske, a parent of a third grader at Flanders Elementary School and recently defeated candidate for the Farmington school board. Although she and other candidates campaigned for the improvement of the science curriculum, she doesn't

think the plan being voted on Tuesday is the way to go about it.

"I urge the board to make the right decision by not approving this curriculum change," Jaske said. "I would also urge the board to seek more input from other concerned parents."

"It is unfortunate this suggested curriculum change occurred after the elec-

Please see SCIENCE, A2

Listening to feedback

Farmington schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield said feedback on the June 7 triple graduation at Compuware Sports Arena has been mostly positive.

However, Maxfield wouldn't say whether the 1999 commencements will return to the Plymouth Township venue. One problem was the bottleneck of graduates, educators and family members shoehorning their way through the concourse towards the exit following each of the graduations. Maxfield said that problem will be examined.

Meanwhile, a large, black curtain behind the stage helped cut the echoes that marred the ceremony last year for Walled Lake's high school graduations. Some tweaking could make the sound even better, Maxfield said.

The district moved its commencements from Crier Arena in Ann Arbor, because that facility

FARMINGTON FOCUS

was not available.

Doing well

Melissa Garr apparently is continuing to improve from her serious injuries sustained in a July 1997 poolside accident at Farmington Glen Aquatic Center.

Seems that Melissa, who attended Farmington High School on a part-time basis the last part of the 1997-98 school year, threw out the first pitch before the Sunday, May 31, Detroit Tigers contest with the Chicago White Sox at Tiger Stadium. According to her dad, Farmington Hills Fire Lt. Mike Garr,

Melissa bounced the ball up to catcher Joe Oliver.

Getting well, via computer

The Farmington Area YMCA's Wellness Center is boasting more usage and member retention, thanks, in part, to the new computerized fitness machines.

Although some members were intimidated at first, Todd Morris, center director, said, "Once they were shown how to use the equipment, they realized the great advantages of the electronic equipment over the old hardware they were familiar with."

The new Lifefitness machines can provide printed exercise summaries so users can track their progress. The machine also checks the user's form and speed. It will beep, for example, if the user performs the movements more quickly than the machine recommends. For details, call the YMCA at 553-4020.

