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Soaked hair day



Sh-sh-sh-shakin': Janine Pesusich, 12, twists and turns after getting out of the pool on a warm Monday at the Kenbrook Club pool on Farmington Road at 13 Mile.



On board: Melissa DeVries, 9, peers over the diving board at her friend, 8-year-old Jenna MacNeil at the Kenbrook Club.



A splash: Alison Goldberg, left, Kathy Bockli and Kelly Zander, all 14, tread water along the Kenbrook pool's edge, where they say they plan to spend the entire summer.

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Their own world: Field Day activities at Cloverdale, a Farmington school for disabled students, offers a chance to do something extra./A3

COMMUNITY LIFE

Extended play: A veteran music director leaves after nearly four decades in the "family atmosphere" of Mercy High School./B1

ENTERTAINMENT

Books: Murder, Mystery & Mayhem's "Michigan Murder Mystery Author Spectacular" features 10 Michigan writers at the store in Farmington Hills./E1

REAL ESTATE

Slow movers: Pros share stories on why homes don't sell faster./F1

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Grease is word for sewer clog

John Travolta and Olivia Newton John haven't been asked to perform in this Farmington Hills grease production.

Farmington Hills and Oakland County officials are casting their sights on a particular restaurant in the Orchard Lake/14 Mile corridor, which is inadvertently plugging up the sewer system with its grimy output.

In April, the city invited 11 enteries in the area to attend a meeting on how to better maintain and clean their grease traps. Only two restaurants - Borders Books and Music and the Macaroni Grill - bothered to show.

Another informal meeting is expected to be scheduled soon.

"We're not looking at it to find a culprit, but to make them aware of what happens (when grease gets into the sewer system)," said Tom Blasell, Public Services director. "It's more of an educational thing."

Grease backs up the sewer system, which results in low-level flooding. Two condominium associations have reported basement flooding, Blasell said.

Oakland County has been out twice to unclog the sewer line.

"It's the fix for the problem, but not the solution," Blasell said. "Basically, grease traps have to be cleaned."

At Monday's city council meeting, an Oakland County Health Division official called attention to the situation.

"Somebody is depositing a large amount of grease into the sewer system, which is costing your taxpayers a lot of money," said William Carlson, Environmental Health supervisor.

School district OKs \$117 million budget

Farmington Public Schools' new budget will fund a new multi-subject teaching system at Warner Middle School, bilingual summer school and new football field lights.

At the same time, the 1998-99 budget adopted by board members will maintain the high level of services to students, according to Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business and finance.

The total cost to the average taxpayer will be about \$4 more a year, and that includes the bond issue tax approved last year. The slight increase is fueled by property value increases, even with a four-tenths-of-a-mill cut in the tax rate.

The district's \$117 million budget was approved 5-0, with Treasurer Joe Svake and Secretary Priscilla Brouillette absent from the meeting.

This new spending plan allows the district to begin implementing an extensive elementary study report, augment bond issue projects with extra work on the inside and outside of schools and fund new technology.

"What's unique about it is that we've been able to budget funds for implementation of the elementary study (nearly \$1.1 million) and to fund some (Mission 2007 long-range) proposals

while staying within our budget parameters," Cannon said.

Some of those proposals from the Mission 2007 plan include implementing multi-subject teaching at Warner Middle School; the Bridges Program at Harrison High School, which will teach high-tech research communication skills; a data management system at Wood Creek Elementary School; and

Please see BUDGET, A8

Bon voyage, Sharon

Farmington Observer ace photographer Sharon LeMieux is hanging up her camera, effective today. LeMieux came to the Observer in 1990 and has won numerous press photography awards over the past eight years. She is leaving to care full-time for her children, Jackie, 4, and Sean, 10 months.

She will still be available to work on a freelance basis, as Farmington residents may encounter her from time to time on the football fields, at city parades and elsewhere.

Good luck, Sharon. Your professionalism and creativity will be missed!

Mission Creek unveiled

The mayors of Farmington and Farmington Hills are getting together late Wednesday to help cut the ribbon on a new development of 31 homes on Freedom Road, between Drake and Halsted.

Called Mission Creek, the new subdivision of single-family homes - priced from \$274,900 to \$319,900 - straddles the border of the two cities. It's being

FARMINGTON FOCUS

developed by Triangle Development, the same firm that is developing Timber Crest subdivision at 12 Mile and Middlebelt.

Housing styles range from a 2,100-square-foot ranch up to a 3,007-square-foot two-story home. Elevation upgrades and walkout basements cost more. For more details, call the sales office at 473-0999.

Revive those car memories

Ever yearn for those classic cars of your youth? The GTO perhaps? Or a nice Mustang convertible? If owning the full-sized version is a tad beyond your means, why not try model size? And what better incentive than the model car/truck contest sponsored by the Farmington Hills 25th anniversary committee?

Models from 1973 and earlier years will be judged.

Town's 'on fire' over store closing

More than 800 names on petitions asking a landlord to keep a grocery store in town just might work, city officials say.



The "power of the people" is picking up steam in downtown Farmington, with residents leading the charge to make sure a high-quality, full-service grocery store takes over the space soon being vacated by Farmer Jack.

Over the weekend, a petition with 829 signatures collected in a one-week span from residents and shoppers of the Downtown Farmington Center Farmer Jack was sent by Federal Express to Frank Descenzo, the director of leasing for Kimco Realty Corporation, the shopping center landlord.

"It (the petition) could have had a couple thousand signatures had their been more time to circulate it," Farmington City Manager Frank Laubhoff

Please see STORE, A6

Hills aims to ticket teens who smoke

Instead of smoke, Farmington Hills officials intend to put the heat on underage smokers.

At Monday's meeting, the Farmington Hills City Council passed an amendment that reaffirms its crackdown on those who peddle tobacco to minors. Retailers who sell cigarettes or tobacco to minors are charged with a misdemeanor, which carries a fine up to \$500.

More so, the council is considering following the lead of Birmingham, West Bloomfield and Troy, whose communities ticket minors who are caught smoking with civil fractions. Under a proposed amendment, a minor caught smoking would pay a \$50 fine and have to take a health class that includes smoking cessation.

Those involved in youth issues are urging council to pass the amendment, which would put more teeth in the existing ordinance.

"We're asking you to look out for those who are too young to make that decision, the teenagers who think they have the rest of their lives to quit smoking," said Debra Kendzierski, Commission on Children, Youth & Families chairwoman.

Last year, Farmington Hills police ticketed 30 minors who were caught smoking. These citations are written under state law, but those are not always prosecuted in Oakland County Probate Court.

Farmington Hills officials would have to work out a contract with probate court, which allows cities to handle the civil infractions instead. Probate court has similar pacts with six cities.

Please see SMOKING, A6

