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IN THE PAPER TODAY

OPINION

Cruelty: A jail sentence is the only way to go with men charged in the recent beheading of a duck./A14

COMMUNITY LIFE

In style: High school students tell us what fashions are in and what's not./B1

SPORTS

Strong: Farmington Hills Mercy appears a strong candidate for a Catholic League championship in girls' cross country./C1

INDEX

Obituaries	A4
Classified Index	G5
Real Estate	G5
Crossword	G7
Jobs	H6
Home & Service	J3
Automotive	J5
Opinion	A14-15
Sports	C1
Calendar	C5
Real Estate	F1



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DASSEL

On guard: Longacre Elementary School Safety Patrols Gabrielle Sikora and Shawn Clark watch for clear spaces in traffic so their classmates can cross Gill Road.

Trying to cross

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The school season is back. And so are worries from Longacre Elementary School parents about the safety of their children who cross Gill every morning and afternoon. Parents want the city of Farmington to pay for an adult crossing guard, to make sure motorists stop at Gill-Arundel - and not pass through the crosswalk. City officials apparently don't

think traffic volume warrants such a hire. But that doesn't mean they aren't concerned about the rush-hour tendencies of on-the-go drivers.

Last Thursday morning, Sept. 3, Joseph Schornack of the Farmington Public Safety Department, and another officer, monitored the morning rush, making sure children were safely crossing Gill and that motorists weren't abusing

Please see CROSS, A5

Dems buoyed by primary results

Democrats in Farmington area county commission races remain hopeful for the November election despite a political landscape that favors GOP candidates.



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

In Farmington area political circles, anonymity plus eternal optimism equals a Democratic candidate in an Oakland County Commission race.

Dems have typically been fodder for well-entrenched GOP incumbents to decimate in the bi-annual county commission elections. This campaign year will be different, pledge two Democratic hopefuls.

Hills resident Ryan Gesund is pitted against Republican incumbent David Moffitt in the 18th District, which includes northern Farmington Hills. Debbie Goldberg is vying against GOP candidate and Hills Councilman Terry Sover in the 19th District, which covers Farmington, southern Farmington Hills and a precinct in Southfield.

County commissioners serve two-year terms. The election is Nov. 3.

"If I work at it, work the doors and shake a lot of hands, I have a shot at it," said Ryan Gesund, 26, who works in his family's car wash business.

Gesund's cohort is no less enthusiastic.

"No. 1, the fact I'm a woman I have a lot going for me," said Goldberg, a Farmington resident and real estate broker. "No. 2, I'm going door to door. I'm trying to get the people I know to get me in touch with those I don't."

Both candidates are buoyed by their August primary numbers. Gesund pulled 3,700 votes while Goldberg netted 2,400. They ran unopposed.

With a little old-fashioned campaigning, they're banking on a much better showing in the general election.

Gesund and Goldberg expect to spend around \$8,000 each. By comparison, Moffitt's campaign spent \$12,000 in the primary to fend off Linda Jolicoeur.

"I'm expecting Mr. Moffitt is going to outpace me 3-to-1. He also had a high profile primary race, which is probably going to help him," Gesund said. "We'd rather spend money going door-to-door and meeting people face-to-face instead of plastering billboards all over. We're

Please see DEMS, A5

PART ONE
IN A SERIES

Teaching gets mixed reviews

EDUCATION UNDER FIRE

BY TIM SMITH • STAFF WRITER

School board veteran is remembered

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Gary Lichtman wasn't afraid to speak his mind, and it was a characteristic that sometimes put him into some difficult situations on the Farmington Board of Education.

But Lichtman always had the best interests of children - and education - at heart during his seven years on the board during the 1970s.

Lichtman, 59, was undergoing treatment for cancer at a Highland Park, Ill., hospital when he died Friday. The official cause of death was listed as cardiac arrest. His brother, Fred, and nephew, Larry, are former members of the Farmington Hills City Council.

"He fought for what was right," his widow, Jo Ann Lichtman, said following Tuesday's burial at Adat Shalom Memorial Park Cemetery in Livonia. Memorial services were held at the Ira Kaufman Chapel in Southfield.

Thinking back to Lichtman's time on the board, she said her husband "made a lot of contributions. He watched the school district grow up."

For example, under his stewardship, Wood Creek Elementary School and Harrison High School were built.

Making sure children with special needs were never shortchanged was one of Lichtman's main agenda items. He would take special education children on Detroit River boat excursions, for example.

"That was the real soft spot in his heart, special education," said Jo Ann Lichtman, who was married to Gary for 38 years. "...He was the most giving man to a community and to his family. He was not pretentious."

Years of service

Gary Lichtman served a total of seven years, including two stints, on the Farmington Board of Education. He also served on the Oakland County School Board, including a stint as president. Originally elected in 1968, Lichtman

Please see GARY, A4

Today's Farmington Observer includes the first story in a series about the much-maligned teaching profession and public education system - increasingly under the microscope all over the United States.

Stories will focus on what is being done in Farmington Public Schools to ensure high quality teaching is taking place and will continue to take place in the future.

With a stringent application and hiring process, and ongoing staff development that exceeds similar efforts in other districts, Farmington schools - although not without problems - apparently is on the right track.

Among other stories, there will be reports about the recruiting of minority teachers and male elementary school teachers, the latter which is in amazingly short supply.

American teachers are under the microscope more than ever before, or so it seems. They are getting burned. And they don't think they're deserving of the criticism that keeps getting fired at them from many points on the compass.

"I'd invite people to come to the schools and see what we do," said Moria Koopman, a teacher at East Middle School in the Farmington district.

For too many, it's not enough.

In the name of tenure, longtime educators - hired in record numbers during the late 1960s and early 1970s - continue to get blasted in the media, in national reports about how they got fat and lazy over time. Or about how they are unwilling to adjust to the new world of team teaching and technology.

Newcomers to the field, and those districts who hire them, are getting ripped for not being qualified enough in the subjects they will teach. Examples are astounding. Earlier this year, nearly 60 percent of new teacher hopefuls in Massachusetts flunked the certification test.

In an era of MEAP overanalysis and overreaction, something not helped by almost annual changes to the test delivery and ranking system, there also is a growing perception that public schools are failing to deliver quality education to each and every child. That includes Harvard-bound Advanced Placement students to those who struggle with grade point but who have tender consciences to those talents trying to be let out and



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARNEGIE

Give and take: This Farmington High School teacher helps students in his communications technology class work on a silk screening project.

nurtured. Politics get in the way

So the pressure is squarely on public school systems, and teachers because of the competition factor: Growing numbers of parents are looking long and hard at sending their youngsters to charter schools, an issue squarely on the front burner in Michigan.

Gov. John Engler is leading the charge to a voucher system where

public education dollars follow students to private education.

"A lot of the banter that's going on about public education is being said by few but being listened to by many," said Cathy Webb, a parent in the district and president of the Farmington Board of Education. "It's frightening, because too often parents are jumping on the political band-

Please see EDUCATION, A3

Let the campaigns begin!



While candidates are pounding the pavement, dominating the airwaves and the print media, we like to hear from you - the average voter - on what you believe are important issues in the November election for governor.

The Observer will host a Citizens' Election Roundtable later this month and we're looking for a few residents to join others throughout your hometown circulation area for a lively discussion of what's important to you - the average voter.

The roundtables will include discussions on the gubernatorial race and statewide ballot issues (physician-assisted suicide and Clean Michigan).

Roundtables will be held 7-9 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 23-24, in our corporate headquarters at 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia.

We're looking for a good cross-section of voters. So if you've got an opinion and are available both evenings, please fill out the guest form which accompanies this article.

We'll notify you if you are selected. The sessions will be photographed and serve as the basis for stories to appear on the Farmington Observer open pages before the Nov. 3 election.

Our readers are well-informed and have lots to say - we know because you write us, e-mail us and fax us on a daily basis. We're counting on a robust discussion of the issues. You provide the opinions, we'll provide the snacks and the moderator.

ELECTION ROUNDTABLE GUEST FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____ ARC: _____

Education: _____

Employment: _____

Professional Affiliations: _____

Community Involvement: _____

What issues are important to you in the November election? _____

Drop this form off or mail it to:
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Or you can fax this form to:
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