

Coming up roses

Farmington Florist's plea for help against deception pays off

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Nearly one year ago, Farmington Florist owner Linda Trzcinski publicly called for help against a deceptive out-of-state telephone-based company.

Now she is almost laughing about the experience and is exhilarated about playing a part in the adoption of House Bill 5499, a law intended to prohibit the type of deceptive practices to which her business was subjected.

"When I got really excited about this is when people call and say, 'Is this the flower shop in downtown Farmington?'" said Trzcinski last week. "I got a chuckle out of that."

Trzcinski's plight was noticed by 37th District House Rep. Andrew Raczowski, R-Farmington Hills. He eventually sponsored the bill that was signed by Gov. John Engler on Wednesday.

■ 'Just to think that I did something that is beneficial for consumers and small businesses, that's nice. Of course, I couldn't have done it without Andy's help.'

Linda Trzcinski
—Farmington Florist owner

Trzcinski, whose longtime floral business is in the Downtown Farmington Center, went to Lansing to see the signing ceremony for herself. She was invited by Raczowski to "be a part of it."

"It has paid off," said Trzcinski about her decision to go public about how her shop was being victimized. "Just to think that I did something that is beneficial for consumers and small businesses, that's nice. Of course, I couldn't have done it without

Andy's help."

The bill "prohibits out-of-state businesses from misleading Michigan residents into thinking they are locally operated (and) stops anyone from listing a business in a local directory with a local number that forwards calls to an out-of-state business without disclosing its address," according to a press release issued by Raczowski's Lansing office.

Civil penalties could range between \$100-\$10,000 for companies that do not comply. Trzcinski and other local florists were taken advantage of this way: White page "duplicate" listings for Farmington Florist and other businesses included



STAFF PHOTO BY GAIL BARKER

Exhilarated: Farmington Florist owner Linda Trzcinski displays the bill that helps her and other business owners.

Bernardsville, N.J., next to local exchange phone numbers. Customers who called 555-1212 for information got the New Jersey

number. And, when a call was placed, it was answered automatically and then forwarded to New Jersey.

Last year, after failing to get sufficient answers from various state and local agencies, Trzcinski shared her plight with the Farmington Observer.

The newspaper ran a front-page article in the Oct. 12, 1997, issue. Two local television stations picked up the story. Raczowski read the article and saw one of the TV news reports and decided to contact the florist. Raczowski promised Trzcinski he would do something to help her and other businesses from being taken advantage of and to protect customers from being duped.

Trzcinski said her business is in very good shape. She moved to a new location in the downtown Farmington Center after being bumped from her old place in favor of Starbucks Coffee.

But, even though House Bill 5499 is now law, Trzcinski has "no way of knowing" if such deceptive practices are still occurring.

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8 p.m. Monday, Sept. 20
City Hall, 23800 Liberty
474-5500

Agenda items include:

■ Downtown Development Authority quarterly report.

■ Appointments of Suzanne Paul to the beautification commission, Patricia Hanpaniemi to the library board and Virginia Britton to Children, Youth & Families.

■ Renewal for public services department collective bargaining

CITY AGENDA

agreement.

■ Set public hearing to reestablish special assessment district regarding principal shopping district.

■ Traffic and safety board recommendation for Grand River/Orchard Lake at Nine Mile Road.

■ Consideration to set study session for museum development committee report.

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Dentistry in the 90s

by Herbert M. Gardner, D.D.S.

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