

Coalition: No simple fix

BY RICHARD PEARL
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Connect the dots.
That was the point of a recent meeting of the Call to Action Coalition. To start connecting the various public and private agencies involved with drug and violence prevention — in other words, the "dots" — so that each supports the other in reducing fragmentation and duplication of effort in programming while also strengthening and increasing its effectiveness.

But, just as there are no "quick fixes" to the problems themselves, there were no expectations of "quick responses" in joining the coalition, said Estralee Michaelson, its executive director.

In fact, she encouraged the approximately 38 community leaders at the June 23 meeting in the Farmington Public Schools Training Center to first disseminate to their groups the information about the coalition because what's

needed is "a commitment to the idea."
"We want to create an intelligent attitude toward inhibitors that threaten the health and safety of our children," she explained.

"Once we change attitudes, we change the behaviors."
"But there's no short-term solution to this. We have to maintain these messages over the long haul," which is why the groups have to make the commitment.

"Only when we coalesce on the same message and share the same goals" will the residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills, both young and old, begin to understand and accept those messages, Michaelson said.

The mayors of both cities, Mary Bush of Farmington and Aldo Vagnoni of Farmington Hills, as well as their police and fire departments and the judiciary, have already committed to the coalition, Michaelson said.

Also on board is Farmington

Public Schools, for which Michaelson is director of its Safe and Drug Free Schools program.

She hopes to hear from the other groups, including mental health and social service agencies, within the next month or so, before the coalition's August meeting.

The Call to Action Coalition, begun in January, 1993, aims to be a catalyst to facilitate alliances between all the agencies and organizations in the two cities working against drugs and violence to create a seamless prevention initiative.

Besides increasing the networking between the groups, the goals include defining and promoting zero and promoting parent/community education plus healthy, safe recreational programs created for and by youngsters at all levels.

For more information, call Michaelson at (248) 489-3408.

Teens offer their observations:

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Teachers joining students in laughing at peer mediation and/or also failing to enforce dress codes...a majority of students saying they lack strong relationships with adults at their school...parents getting drunk or smoking in front of their kids, but telling the kids not to....

These were a few of the poignant comments from a group of Farmington and Farmington Hills students who are working against drugs and violence in their schools.

They were addressed to adults from various community organizations dealing with those issues who attended the Call to Action Coalition meeting June 23 at the Farmington Public Schools Training Center.

The teens' observations underscored the urgency of the meeting's purpose, which was to begin forming a concrete coalition that would both support the efforts of the myriad groups while also reducing fragmentation and duplication of those efforts.

As Estralee Michaelson, Coalition executive director, put it: "If the YMCA has already begun one program, why should the schools (for example) reinvent such a program?"

The roughly 35 adults — including both cities' mayors and police officials, plus representatives of the judiciary, the school district and social service agencies — listened intently as Steven Petersen of Duckel Middle School, Erin Held of Harrison High School and Lauren Zakalik and Lindsey

Manuszak of North Farmington High said:
■ Parents need to think more about what they do — like drinking and smoking — in front of their kids.
■ That 60 percent of Harrison students say they don't have a strong relationship with an adult at school;
■ That some teachers fail to enforce dress codes and that others laugh along with their students at the introduction of peer mediation to prevent fights between students;
■ And, that high school and college students from the area want to help curtail drinking and violence on campuses.

On a more positive note, Zakalik told how 100 North Farmington students gathered around their school's flagpole the morning after the discovery of a "hit-list" like the one in Littleton, Colo., and declared, "We won't stand for this at our school."

Michaelson, who also is director of the Farmington district's Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, told the gathering that, while the Coalition has been looking to do more for kids since January, 1998 — "long before Colorado" — that alone isn't enough.
"We need to reduce redundancy" in anti-drug, anti-violence programming, she said.
"The kids are telling us we are losing credibility" the longer redundancy and duplication continues.

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short of increases experienced by westerly neighbors South Lyon (41 percent) and Novi (35.6 percent), an increase of 5,000 residents is still substantial.

Farmington, which is older and built up, is one of the few cities in the country with a population of 10,000 or more to show a decline.

Among the 2,578 U.S. cities with 10,000 or more people in 1998, 1,854 or 71.9 percent, gained population while the remaining 724 lost population between 1990 and 1998, the U.S. Census report said. Farmington had 10,170 residents in 1990 and is estimated to have 9,945 eight years later.

Farmington officials are not overly worried about an estimated loss of 225 residents.

"Remember those are estimates," City Manager Frank Lauffhoff said. "I'm really unsure how much faith to put in those

figures.
"We're going to wait for what the new census tells us."

Information used in the 1990 U.S. Census included address omissions, which the city is working to clear up, Lauffhoff said.

Though family sizes are generally smaller, Farmington does experience considerable turnover with couples and children moving into its subdivisions, Lauffhoff said.

State aid is partly based on population. Under new tabulations, cities are getting less, which makes any population loss something of a "double hit," Lauffhoff said.

"When we lose someone, it does mean a loss of (state shared) revenue," he said. "We want to make sure everyone is counted correctly."

Cities such as Detroit view U.S. Census figures as particu-

larly crucial because state and federal aid depends on population. Census estimates put Detroit below the one-million mark, which would lead to a substantial revenue loss.

Another substantial population threshold is 100,000, though Hills planners don't expect to ever reach that mark.

At most, the city will hit 90,000 during the next millennium.

"We will max out before (100,000)," Lampi said. "We're running out of lots and acreage."

Both cities plan to have public awareness campaigns to encourage people to answer the U.S. Census. People are worried personal information will be shared with others, Lampi said.

"We want to assure them the information is confidential," Lampi said.

Civic from page A1

decision."

During that same interview, Lauffhoff promised that, under the new regime, theater would stay as they are, and that patrons can expect to get the same type of family entertainment — second-run movies and live programming, such as the recent comedy bill starring Soupy Sales.

Painful decision

Hohler's decision didn't happen overnight.

For much of this decade, Hohler painfully considered whether it finally was time to exit the industry. In recent years, he could look out from his office window at the Civic and virtually see more than 100 screens go up within seven miles of his legendary independent.

Demands of trying to keep the business afloat lately took up most of Hohler's life, and eventually forced him to step down from his position with the Farmington Downtown Development Authority.

Still, Hohler homed and hawed. Last September, he approached Lauffhoff as a courtesy, to let him know he was about to put the theater up for sale.

Lauffhoff implored Hohler to hold off a while, until a city investigation into possibly purchasing it could be completed. Plante & Moran checked out the Civic's financial books for the past five years and the city sought out potential management companies.

"I thought that would be the

best long-term use for the facility," said Hohler, about the city purchasing the theater. "But just from my end, but for the community as a whole, there's certainly a lot of history there, a lot of legacy. It's very integral to the downtown."

Indeed, fresh from community "visioning" sessions in 1995, where the Civic was heralded as a downtown treasure worth keeping viable, Lauffhoff and other officials knew it would be risky business if the theater went into the wrong hands.

"That was a big concern of the city council," Lauffhoff said. "What if there'd be no guarantee that it'd remain a family theater? If Realtor sold the Civic to an outsider."

Zoning issues also played a role in the council's decision to pursue the theater.
"That property over there, with the current zoning, could be sold for a theater, for retail, for general assembly purposes," Lauffhoff said. "Or a (banquet) hall."

Even though the Civic will be owned by the city of Farmington, Lauffhoff insisted that M.K.A. will order the popcorn and decide which films to run.

"The city has no intent on operating it on a day-to-day basis," Lauffhoff said.

Still a draw
Both Hohler and Lauffhoff said the expected sale doesn't mean the Civic has been doing poorly in recent years. Lauffhoff said about 8,000 tickets were sold last year, down from 10,000 in

1994.
"They provide a quality entertainment location for families," Lauffhoff said. "And that's the primary goal and concern of the city council, to continue that."

According to Hohler, he could have continued operating the business for another five or 10 years. The facility is in good condition. But, down the road, when major repairs would eventually need to be made, Hohler wouldn't have been financially able to do them, he said.

"It's the end of the Hohler-family era, certainly," Hohler said. "All eras have to end. That's just the way life is. But it's also the start of a very exciting new era... Life is change."

But Lauffhoff said the familiar marquee won't. He called it the one symbol of downtown Farmington known throughout the metro Detroit area.

"The city recognizes how important the look of the theater is to people," Lauffhoff said. "The city will be looking to improve things (inside), put some money back into things to make them look new again."

One projected change, added Lauffhoff, is that the Bead Bohemia shop adjacent to the Civic likely will relocate elsewhere downtown, enabling the lobby area to be expanded.

Woman injured in 3-car accident

A 79-year-old Farmington woman was taken to Botsford Hospital after she complained of neck pain following a three-car accident Thursday afternoon on Farmington Road, police said.
Earlier that day, two vehicles collided about a block south at Locum. There were no injuries, but both vehicles were heavily

damaged.
The later accident happened around 4:20 p.m. when the woman, enshrouded on Alta Loma, drove through the red light and into oncoming traffic on Farmington, police reported.

The woman, who was ticketed for running a red light, was struck on the driver's side of her

1993 Buick by a 1998 Ford driven by a 54-year-old Dearborn Heights man.

The third vehicle, a 1999 Toyota Camry driven by a 40-year-old Farmington Hills woman, hit the rear of the Ford.

The Toyota was driveable but the other two vehicles weren't.

AGENDA

Farmington City Council Meeting
23600 Liberty Street
Tuesday, July 6
8 p.m.

■ Introduction: 1999 Trout Derby winner, Eric M. Petersen

■ Presentation: Co-Chairs, Jim McGilney and Penny Letts Governor Warner Mansion Development Committee Update.

■ Consideration to ratify purchase agreement for the Farmington Civic Theatre.

■ Consideration to approve Civic Theatre management contract with M.K.A. Inc. of Wkom.

■ Consideration to approve resolutions for city charter amendment ballot propositions.

OBITUARIES

KAREN LACOFF
Services for Karen Lacoff, 48, of Farmington Hills, were held July 1 at the Neely-Turkowski Funeral Home in Livonia with the Rev. Mark Kieft officiating.
Ms. Lacoff was born March 14, 1951 in Detroit and died June 28 in Saginaw.
She was a computer programmer for the state of

Michigan.
She is survived by daughter, Laura Gach; parents, Gerson and Elaine; sister, Mary Jeanne (Art) Tender, niece, Hall Tender, Jane (Don) Hurley and Kara Findley; companion, Ronald Cavalli; and sister-in-law, Bonnie (Dave) Findley.
Memorial contributions can be made to Promise Village, 2690 Crooks, Suite 300, Troy 48064.

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ing forward after they were shown the tape."

The teen charged has no prior criminal record and is described by his attorney as "a good kid" from tight-knit family.

The Walled Lake Western senior is a few credits shy of graduating, his attorney said. He was also recently diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, Nemeth said.

As to why someone would possibly fabricate such a story, the attorney refused to speculate.

"That's the problem with rumors: How do you chase a rumor down?" he said.



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