

Farmington Observer

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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Open: The Farmington Hills Secretary of State branch has reopened at a new location: 35572 Grand River. It opened Friday.

TUESDAY

Threes: The Farmington Hills City Council, Farmington City Council and Farmington Board of Education will meet at 7:30 p.m. at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas. The meeting is open to the public.

Help: Don't forget that the AARP will help seniors with their income tax forms 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the senior center in Farmington Hills. Call 473-1830 for information.

WEDNESDAY

Reopened: The Gov. Warner Mansion/Farmington Historical Museum has reopened. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Admission is \$1.

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FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

Editor's note: From now until the debut of the Festival of the Arts April 25-May 2 at the William Costick Activities Center, we will highlight the myriad of clubs and organizations that comprise the Farmington Community Arts Council, which hosts the week-long festival.

Community Chorus

The 20-year-old chorus still has some of its original members, such as president Sara Woollard.

"It's for fun for anyone who takes their music seriously," said Woollard. The chorus has three major concerts throughout the year, including one in Heritage Park.

The chorus has about 80 members, all adults, and has had as many as 120.

Auditions are held every September at the beginning of each new annual session. Members usually have had private voice instruction or instruction through schools or churches, Woollard said.

"Generally we do everything from classical to pop, show tunes. We try to cover all the bases," she added.

Please see **ARTS**, A3

FARMINGTON COMMUNITY
ARTS COUNCIL



Concerned: Sevdije Vilasaliu and her son, Arti, want U.S. citizenship. The immigrants are worried about their family members who remain in Kosovo, particularly with the NATO bombing.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRISLER

Kosovo

Immigrants fear for family

By TIM SMITH
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With NATO bombing imminent Wednesday in her homeland of Kosovo, Yugoslavia, Sevdije Vilasaliu couldn't pay close attention to the daily duties of her Farmington dry cleaners.

"All day, I can't press (clothes) or do anything," said Sevdije, co-owners of Grand One Hour Cleaners with husband Selim. "I watch TV. I have family there ... my dad, everybody. I'm afraid. What can I say?"

Sevdije spoke in broken English, which actually is much improved over when she, Selim and daughter Mike (who turns 3 on Tuesday) reached New York City on July 4,

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1995. Wednesday, she was seemingly tired and emotional. There were more television news crews in her business than customers at this particular afternoon.

"I never go home not thinking about them (family in Kosovo)," said Sevdije, educated as a lawyer in Belgrade. "I'd like to go home and take a rest... but (she can't) until this is resolved."

The couple - who now also have a 3-year-old son, Arti - are waging a personal battle as well. They continue attempts to gain United States citizenship, but only have until September to do so, or else face

potential deportation back to the place they dread returning to.

Somehow, Farmington Mayor Pro Tem Bill Hartsock learned about the family's plight, how they were ripped off and exploited since immigrating to New York City on July 4, 1995.

According to a March 8 letter to U.S. Sen. Carl Levin from Hartsock and Farmington Mayor Mary Bueh, the family spent more than \$12,000 on legal fees in attempts to gain U.S. citizenship, but "there appears to be no record of their request."

The letter, hand-delivered to Levin at his Washington, D.C., office, also notes that the family, in

Please see **KOSOVO**, A4

Small project, big impact

Residents want to know what density a developer plans for new ranch-style homes in an older part of the city.

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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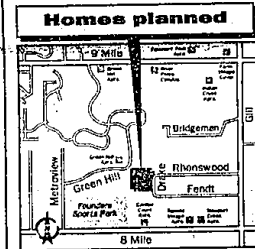
An older part of Farmington Hills could see new ranch-style homes built. The question residents want answered is: How many?

Sam Baki of Baki Unique Homes plans to build on a parcel on Rhonawood, which is off Drake and Eight Mile roads. Two houses sit on the 330-foot wide by 394-foot deep piece of land, which encompasses three acres.

Under the cluster option, Baki believes up to eight 1,800-square foot ranches could work, especially when buttressed next to Founders Sports Park.

"Ranches would be perfect there," he said.

With site condominiums, he'd look at



Please see **HOUSES**, A5

Pills, hypothermia blamed in death

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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Farmington Hills police haven't closed the death investigation case involving a French woman, though a medical examiner's report indicates she

died of a combination of over-the-counter sleeping pills and hypothermia.

Julio Yasa, 28, died in a wooded area off Nine Mile Road March 3. Her death has triggered international attention over Internet romances.

Yasa traveled from France to meet a Farmington Hills man with whom she carried on an eight-month e-mail correspondence but who later rejected her.

"While all of our findings agree with the medical examiner's, it's our position that we have a responsibility to

this young, dead woman who cannot tell her side of events," said assistant chief Chuck Nebus. "Until we have findings on the last few remaining items we have to follow up on, the investigation remains open."

Please see **DEATH**, A4

CDBG cash threatened

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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A U.S. Senate budget resolution could take the hammer out of hands of Farmington Hills homeowners who want to repair their houses.

However, Farmington Hills city officials remain vigilant in protecting Community Development Block Grant money, which goes towards the city's housing rehabilitation program and capital improvement projects.

A proposal in the U.S. Senate Budget Committee would slash 40 percent from Community Block Grant Development funds, which would cut \$168,000 from \$420,000 Farmington Hills is expected to receive for 1999-2000.

"We have talked to (Sen. Carl) Levin and (U.S. Rep. Joe) Knollenberg. We obviously don't think it's a good idea," City Manager Steve Brock said. "We use that money very prudently."

The 40 percent reduction would cost the city of Farmington about \$13,000, said city manager Frank Leuboff. As part of the housing rehabilitation program, the city makes loans to homeowners that are repaid at \$90,000 a year. That money is then added to the



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRISLER

Donate: A.J. Dompierre Construction of Farmington is donating every single cedar picket to the "Kids World" PlayScape. Here, founder A.J. and sons Jeff and Joe Dompierre stand by the stack.

Contractor would rather build a fence

By TIM SMITH
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Farmington contractor A.J. "AJ" Dompierre, along with sons Joe and Jeff, won't be building a bridge to the community. But that's all right with them.

They'd rather put up a fence.

In fact, thanks to a generous donation from A.J. Dompierre Construction, each and every cedar picket in the "Kids World" PlayScape at Shiloh Park will be donated by the family-owned business. The Dompierres also pledged tools and cash, up to a total donation (including lumber) of \$5,000.

And there are a lot of pickets to be erected. So far, about 850 of the "Pick-a-Pickets" have sold, at \$25 each. Pickets are still available; each can be inscribed with the name of a person, family or business.

"You can't do enough for kids," said founder AJ Dompierre, who has operated his business in Farmington for 35 years. "Let's give them something to do."

The service-minded Dompierre family wanted to do something for the community anyway.

Please see **FENCE**, A5



Please see **CDBG**, A4