

# Volunteers wait to discover a new shop

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI  
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The American Cancer Society's Discovery Shop in the Downtown Farmington Center is looking for a new home.

"We need a landlord with a heart or a benefactor who can keep us in this area," said volunteer Beulah Gray.

The Discovery Shop was recently informed by the center's owner, Kimco Realty Corp., that its month-to-month lease will be up Sept. 30, leaving the eight-year-old store without a home.

The Discovery Shop sells upscale resale clothing as a fund-raising mechanism for the cancer society. Eighty-five volunteers, mostly cancer survivors, work at the store in various capacities.

For Gray, news of the Discovery Shop's impending departure from the center was devastating.

"This is their support group," she said. "This is all going to be destroyed."

But efforts are already afoot to find new quarters for the shop. As far as many volunteers are concerned, leaving the Farmington-Farmington Hills area is out of the question.

"That's not really our role (to keep the Discovery Shop in the center.) Our role is to try to keep them in the community," said City Manager Frank Laubhoff.

Kimco's Frank Descente was unavailable for comment.

Laubhoff said he contacted several property owners in Farmington and then contacted Discovery Shop manager Bridget O'Shea. "I put them in touch with each other. That's the most we can really do," Laubhoff said.

In the eight years in business the Discovery Shop has brought in more than \$1 million, said Marnie Keifer, regional merchandise manager for the American Cancer Society.

"It's a big business," she said, referring to the more than 100 Discovery stores throughout the country. "It has to be a business decision (where to relocate). But the volunteers are the heart of the shops."

Keifer said American Cancer Society officials are "in the throes of researching Farmington, Farmington Hills and Livonia. That's where we draw our volunteers from. We are in the process of reviewing sites."

The need to move by the month's end was not an overwhelming surprise for Keifer. "We had known for a couple of years this would happen," she said. "It (reasonable rent) was a gift from that landlord."

But volunteers such as Gray are mourning the closing of the store that has provided not only quality resale clothing, American Cancer Society holiday cards, but camaraderie and support.

"I can't sleep I'm so upset about it," Gray said. "There isn't a family that hasn't been touched by cancer in one way or another."

Gray said the loss of the store in downtown Farmington will have a ripple effect. If clothes don't sell at the shop after three weeks, they are given to the Salvation Army. What can't be sold



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEY

Supporting: Volunteers (above) on Tuesday at the Discovery Shop are (from left) Helene Wegier, Barbara Windsor, Shirley Spaseff, Margaret Dillworth and Beulah Gray. Below, Bridget O'Shea, manager of the store, looks over signs produced by volunteer Nick Caracci of Printmax in Troy.

■ 'We had known for a couple of years this would happen.'

Marnie Keifer  
—American Cancer Society

there goes to homeless families. Clothing that is not quite what the Discovery Shop is looking for goes to families involved with Head Start in Farmington.

"It comes into our shop and ripples down," Gray added. "I cannot sit by and see this happen to my community."

On the other hand, Keifer is hoping that wherever the shop relocates, volunteers and customers will follow. "We have such a loyal following. The volunteers make it what it is, as well as the customers. The store has been a credit to Farmington."



Added touch: Helene Wegier's job is arranging the book displays.

## Mayoral candidate heats up meeting

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
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Mayoral challenger George Sarkisian got into a heated exchange with Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi after the candidate made demands of the city manager and city attorney.

During the public comments portion of Monday's meeting, Sarkisian asked City Manager Steve Brock to outline plans for an animal park by the next meeting, Sept. 27, and then wanted the city attorney to chastise a city council member.

Sarkisian left city council chambers 0-for-2.

He is running against Mayor Pro-Tem Nancy Bates for mayor in the Nov. 2 election.

Sarkisian proposed to donate \$500 for what he's titled the "George Sarkisian Fields of Freedom," a 10-acre park for animals, in a letter to Brock. He asked that the item be on the agenda, but Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi refused.

"We haven't even studied it yet," Vagnozzi said. "We're not going to debate this here ... You're not going to rush us into something."

Then Sarkisian requested city attorney John Donohue meet with Councilwoman Jody Soronen to admonish her for threatening him with a \$10,000 fine after he brought a campaign sign into council chambers during a meeting Aug. 22.

No such fine exists in city ordinances. Council does have an informal agreement that campaigning can't take place at meetings.

After the Aug. 22 meeting, Soronen confronted Sarkisian about his placard when the councilwoman supposedly mentioned

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a fine.

Instead of a public apology, Sarkisian said he'd settle for a letter from Donohue that stated he spoke to the councilwoman about her "disrespectful" behavior, especially from someone, as he pointed out, who was appointed instead of elected.

When Sarkisian asked Donohue if he would get such a letter, the attorney replied, "No you will not."

Sarkisian interrupted Vagnozzi when the mayor tried to intercede, saying he had the floor. "I always have the floor," the mayor countered.

"You just can't stop listening to yourselves," Sarkisian said. "You like to hear the sound of your own voices."

He also chortled when Councilman Jerry Ellis gave his version of what was said after the meeting Aug. 22. The councilman said Soronen suggested she'd like to propose an ordinance levying a \$10,000 fine for anyone who brings in a political placard. "She didn't threaten anyone," Ellis said.

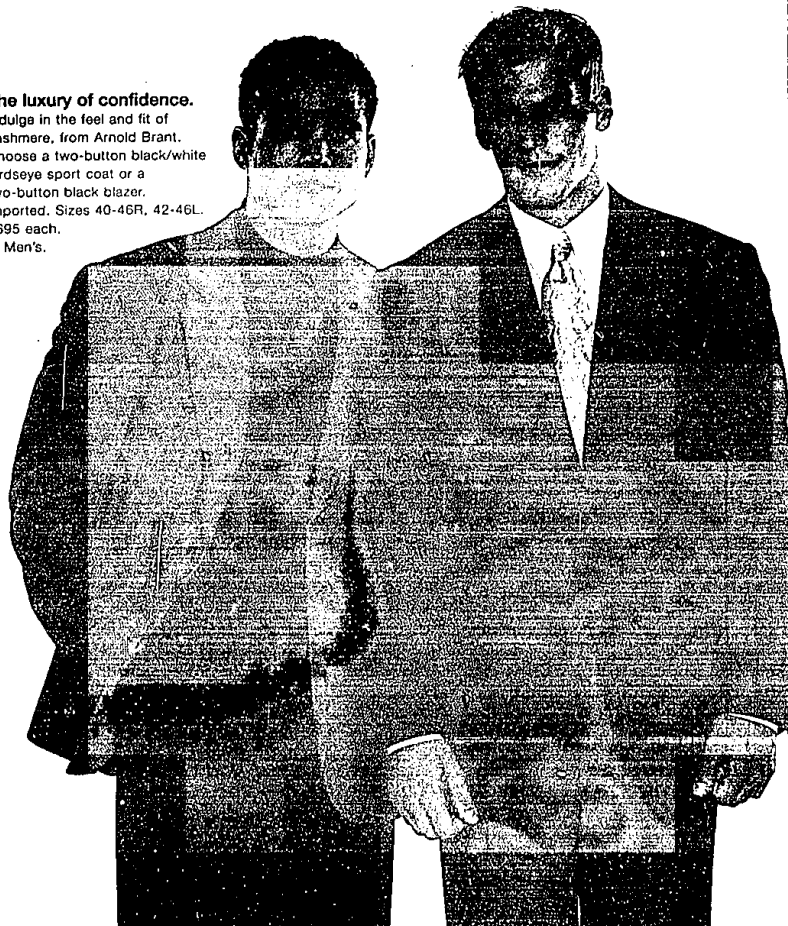
At the Aug. 22 meeting, Ellis asked that a letter be sent to candidates reminding them of the "gentleman's agreement" about campaigning in council chambers.

Sarkisian said the sign was at his feet in the back of the council chambers. Vagnozzi accused him of having the placard nearby above his head to get the attention of cable TV cameras.

"I think you ought to campaign out with the people opposed to the city council," Vagnozzi said.

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