

Farmington Observer



Sunday
December 12, 1999

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 113 years

VOLUME 113 NUMBER 23

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 62 PAGES • <http://observer-eccentric.com>

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THE WEEK AHEAD

Cantata: Forest Park Baptist Church will present its Children's Christmas Musical at 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12. The Adult Christmas Cantata will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 19. The church is located at 26805 Farmington Road. Call 476-0080.

MONDAY

Perform: Farmington High School band and orchestra students will perform "Music for the Holidays" at 7:30 p.m. at the Farmington High School auditorium.

Meet: The Farmington Hills City Council meets at 7:30 p.m.

HOMETOWN HISTORY

Millennium: Be a part of your Hometown History. Usher in 2000 with a photograph and special message in the Farmington Observer. Please see page C9 for details.

INDEX

Arts	C1
Classified Index	E4
Autos	H2
Home & Service Guide	G11
Jobs	G1
Real Estate	E1
Rentals	E6
Crossword	E5
Health	D4
New Homes	E1
Obituaries	A10
Sports	B1
Taste	D1
Travel	C8

MEAP stumps students

Fifth- and eighth-grade students struggled with the state's first MEAP test in social studies. But they still fared better than the state averages.

By TIM SMITH
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Farmington school district students struggled with the first Michigan Educational Assessment Program social studies test, yet still outperformed state test averages.

But there is optimism that round two will bring improvement, said Kristin Gekiere, administrator for research, assessment, testing and evaluation for the Farmington district.

The debut social studies MEAP test — with emphasis on critical thinking and writing — was administered to fifth and eighth graders in January and February. (High school juniors took the test in the spring; those results are not yet available.)

Eighth graders in Farmington fared better than fifth graders did. Scores at the elementary schools were "all over the place" but more consistent at the middle school level.

"People did not know what was expected or how to prepare for it," said Gekiere. "And the test is different. It required more higher-level thinking, more constructed responses."

For example, a student would be required to read a graph or chart and, using prior knowledge, write a two-page report. Tested subjects included civics, economics, geography and history.

Test scores are expected to improve as districts become familiar with the content of the social studies portion. Timing is another problem: some schools in the state teach different subjects at different times of the year.

Besides being new, the social studies test was described as the most challenging part of the MEAP, according to a report issued by the state education department. "Critical thinking skills alone are not enough for students to be successful on this test," it stated.

Gekiere said students performed "pretty equal" among those four subjects at the elementary and middle school levels.

Fifth grade comparison
Even so, Farmington fifth graders

Please see MEAP, A6



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARBER
Hello: Santa stopped by to join members of the Farmington Community Chorus for a rehearsal. The chorus presents "It Must Be the Holiday Season" on Dec. 17 and 18, at Mercy High School, at 8 p.m.



Keyboard: Accompanist Susan Garr listens to Santa plunk out a Christmas carol.

Chorus dishes up holiday program

By JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
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Tickets are selling fast for the Farmington Community Chorus' annual Holiday Concert at 8 p.m. Dec. 17 and 18 at the Mercy Auditorium at Middlebelt and 11 Mile roads.

"We've been rehearsing since the Tuesday after Labor Day," said Jeff Zorn, member and publicity chairman.

The holiday concert is one of two of the chorus' major concerts of the year. The other is in the spring.

Guests will be treated to a host of holiday favorites, including "Glory to the New Born King," "Menorah, Menorah," "Hurray for Christmas," "Do You Hear What I Hear," and "Gloria."

But there's even more in store for guests who be treated to a number of smaller acts performed by soloists and smaller groups within the 75-80-

Please see CHORUS, A4

Tickets on sale for Civic gala

Tickets are still on sale for the much-anticipated Civic Theatre Grand Re-Opening Gala Weekend. A \$50-per-ticket gala on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2000, probably will be the celebration's pinnacle.

There will be opportunities available for anybody in the community to help with the festivities, which are scheduled Friday-Sunday, Jan. 7-9, 2000.

The city of Farmington purchased the Civic this year from Greg Hohler, whose family had owned the Grand River landmark since its opening in 1940.

Following are some of the highlights on the schedule:

Please see CIVIC, A6

On assignment Volunteer begins his tour of duty in Asia

Hello everybody from Uzbekistan. I hope all is well in Farmington. This is my first report as a Peace Corps volunteer in Uzbekistan, which is in central Asia and part of the former Soviet Union.

I am almost three months into my service and will be leaving for my permanent site in Samarkand soon. Samarkand is the second largest city in Uzbekistan. The population is between 500,000 and 600,000. The climate is moderate with four seasons.

Samarkand is in a valley and is surrounded by mountains and desert. It is the biggest city on the historic "Silk Road."

I will be teaching business and economics at two universities, one being Samarkand State and Institute and the other Samarkand Architectural and Building Institute. My secondary project will be helping local farmers obtain small loans through an organization known as Mercy Corps.

As far as the last few months have gone, were do I begin? A group of 60 volunteers, including myself, arrived in Tashkent at 4 a.m. Aug. 18. We had connecting flights in Brussels and Istanbul about eight hours after the major earthquake, but had no idea what had happened until we were in Tashkent the next day.

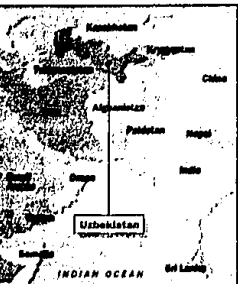
For the first week of training we all

Please see UZBEKISTAN, A4

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT



Farmington Peace Corps volunteer DAVE CLINARD e-mails his articles from Uzbekistan



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARBER
Crunch: The after-school crowd hits the streets in front of Farmington High School. The city proposes an ordinance to limit street parking.

Rules introduced to prohibit parking

By TIM SMITH
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Farmington High School staff and students turned Shiawassee Road into an auxiliary parking lot of sorts because of the major construction this year.

Soon, however, those who continue parking there face the likelihood of being issued citations by the Farmington Public Safety Department.

On Monday, Dec. 6, the city council introduced a pair of traffic ordinance amendments requiring that vehicles belonging to PHIS

staff and students be parked on school property. Both are expected to be formally approved at the next session, 8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 3.

"We did have a big (parking) problem because of the construction workers" taking up regular parking space to park their vehicles, said Farmington High Principal John Barrett, who recently asked the city to review the situation. "The city allowed parking along Shiawassee and we needed it."

Major construction is nearing an

Please see PARKING, A6

