

Civic groups sought for fest

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
STAFF WRITER
jmaliszewski@ecce.homecomm.net

Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce officials say they expect civic and community organizations to step up and get involved to give the Farmington Founders Festival a new lease on life.

"The chamber's position is that all organizations that receive a financial benefit have the obligation to support the festival," said Steve Pope, chamber board chairman and Observer & Eccentric Newspapers general manager. "The new entity needs to make changes to the festival."

To start with, the festival needs a new identity, said Carleigh Flaherty, chamber president. "It needs to be identifiable with Farmington and Farmington Hills."

Despite the desire to turn the festival over to a new, nonprofit organization, the chamber is expected to remain involved to some extent.

"We will play a critical role," Flaherty said. "We want to be highly involved in what happens in the festival."

For the most part, the festival has been a downtown Farmington event. But Flaherty said a changed festival must include activities in Farmington Hills. The festival also must tap into community resources, she added.

'We want the organizations to take some ownership. We want the festival to be new, fresh and bigger.'

Carleigh Flaherty
—Chamber president

Some ideas for a changed festival include a musical festival, highlighting fine arts. "We need to explore the possibilities. We need to talk to festival people in other communities," Flaherty said.

In 1999, plans for the festival that will be July 8-10 include fireworks July 4 and a circus in Farmington Hills July 8. "We want to promote these things with the festival," Flaherty said.

As with other community festivals, local business owners, particularly retailers, do not see a festival as a boon for their business, but sometimes a hindrance because of parking, competition from crafters and other booths.

"As a chamber we can then identify what business has to do. We could have sidewalk sales and promote them. We could have corporate wellness programs during the festival," Flaherty said.

In 1998, the festival attendance was down. "We find ourselves up against more and more

competition," said Jody Soronen, former chamber president and community affairs representative, who has been the kingpin behind the festival for the past 16 years.

"The chamber was not the single initiator for the festival. It was started 34 years ago because of the mid-summer doldrums in retail. Merchants thought it was a way to draw people downtown and to generate sales," Soronen said.

At first, the chamber was just a cog in the larger wheel of the festival. But as time went on, volunteers who organized and ran the festival got burned out. In the late 1980s, Farmington Hills Councilman Jon Grant, then chamber board chairman, proposed that the chamber should take over the festival.

"Then it became our baby but we always had volunteers," Soronen said. "But we always had to do some kind of fund raising to support the festival."

The chamber is urging community organizations to get involved in planning a new festival. "We want the organizations to take some ownership. We want the festival to be new, fresh and bigger," Flaherty said.

For mom



The king: Brad Baker is 1998 homecoming king for Farmington High School. The crowning ceremony at the football game lasted longer than planned. Brad is on the football team and had to join his team on the field before we could photograph him and the homecoming queen together. Brad's mom was disappointed that he wasn't photographed for the Observer with the homecoming queen when both were crowned. So, this one's for mom.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL WELLS

You've Lived A Life Of Dignity, Independence And Choice.

At Botsford Commons' Assisted Living Center You Don't Have To Change A Thing.



Announcing the opening of Botsford Commons Assisted Living Center. This innovative facility, located in an historic and newly renovated Albert Kahn-designed

building in Farmington Hills, offers a caring environment for those who need support to maintain daily living routines. Residents receive assistance only with the services needed and requested, encouraging each individual to remain as independent as possible in a safe and secure environment. Center residents retain privacy and comfort in individual apartments while their psychological and social needs are met through a variety of programs and group activities. Easily accessible community living, dining and social areas complement comfortable accommodations with private



baths and generous space for treasured personal furnishings. The center features a chapel, clinical offices and a full range of health care services including geriatric assessment programs. As an older adult, you've lived a life that has been one characterized by dignity, independence and choice. It should continue to be. When you choose Botsford Commons Assisted Living Center, you insure that the next chapter of your life is filled with the same richness of choice and independence to which you are accustomed and that you deserve.

For more information, call 248-477-1646.



The Tiffany Setting

More than a century ago, Tiffany invented a setting in platinum designed to showcase the quality and brilliance of our exceptional diamonds. This classic, six-prong setting remains the standard for engagement rings—a testament to the enduring value of Tiffany design. For a copy of our *How to Buy a Diamond* booklet or video, please call or visit Tiffany & Co.

Tiffany diamond engagement rings from \$850 to \$850,000

TIFFANY & Co.

TRIO • SOMERSET COLLECTION 14K-18K • OPEN 10-6, SAT 10-6, SUN 12-6

Botsford
HEALTH CARE CONTINUUM

28050 Grand River Avenue, Farmington Hills, MI 48336-5933