

Farmington Observer

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 112 years

HomeTown
COMMUNITY NEWS SERVICE
Putting you in touch
with your world

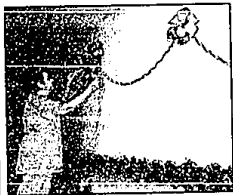
Sunday
December 20, 1998

VOLUME 112 NUMBER 25

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48031-1707 FAX 313-277-0800

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

Deck the halls



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRESLER

Creative: Pat Michael decorated her fourth-floor lobby at Farmington Place. Please turn to Page A3 for a story and more photos of the festive decorations.

THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Agenda: The Farmington Hills City Council will meet at 7:30 p.m. at city hall, 31555 11 Mile.

CLOSINGS

Closings: The Farmington and Farmington Hills city halls will close for Christmas Eve and Christmas, Thursday, Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25.

INDEX

Obituaries	A6
Classified Index	E5
Real Estate	E1
Crossword	E7
Jobs	H1
Home & Service	H10
Automotive	J1
Taste	B1
Arts & Leisure	C1
Malls	C6
Sports & Recreation	D1

Death puts lawsuit in limbo

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@homecomm.net

A man's federal lawsuit against the city of Farmington Hills and police department is in limbo with the sudden death of the plaintiff.

Anthony Margiotta, 66, died of heart failure Dec. 3. In November, he filed a \$20 million suit in U.S. District Court charging the city, police and a Hills-based law firm worked in collusion to defraud him of prime real estate.

The real-estate broker represented himself in the litigation, which was part of an ongoing 12-year legal battle over disputed land. The U.S. District Court had dismissed similar lawsuits Margiotta filed.

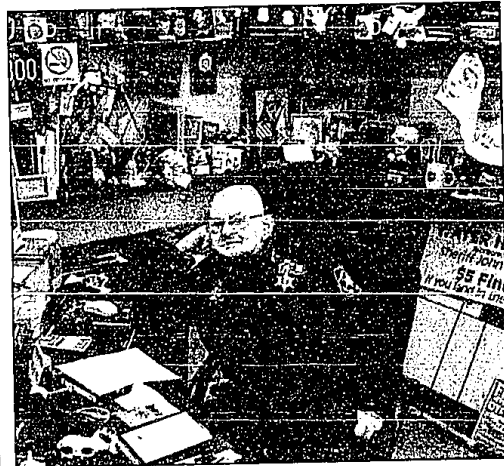
"He'd be a principal witness and obviously he can't be a witness," said Rufus Nye of Municipal Risk Management, which is the city's insurance carrier. "Our attorney could ask for the case to be dismissed or it could get dismissed because of a lack of progress."

Margiotta's estate could need to follow up

Please see LIMBO, A2.



Former Chief John Nichols dies



Colorful: Called the epitome in law enforcement, Sheriff John Nichols, formerly Farmington Hills police chief, died early Friday morning.



Oakland County Sheriff John Nichols died Friday, capping a longtime career in law enforcement, including a colorful stint as police chief in Farmington Hills.

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER
pmurphy@homecomm.net

He had been hospitalized for almost two weeks, and those close to Sheriff John F. Nichols knew he was failing. Yet when death came Friday, there was shock and grief.

"We knew he was in bad shape," said Oakland County Prosecutor David Goren. "But we were all hoping for the best."

Flags at the county complex were lowered to half-mast in honor of Nichols who died about 3:25 a.m. at Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital where he had been admitted Dec. 7 for what was described as a "routine examination."

He died of complications associated to congestive heart failure and emphysema, according to a hospital spokesperson.

"There were a lot of teary eyes around here today," said Capt. Mike McCabe, who was interviewed by Nichols when he joined the department 22 years ago. "But after awhile, people were telling their fondest John Nichols stories."

McCabe remembers "shaking in my boots" when Nichols was on the oral

review panel considering him for employment. "I was fresh out of Michigan State, and there was John Nichols with jaw jutting out and his crew cut. I was thrilled."

Please related stories, Page A7

As he spent more time with the department — and saw the sheriff in action — said McCabe. "He was the epitome of law enforcement," he said.

Nichols started his career in law enforcement in January, 1942 at the age of 24 when he joined the Detroit Police Department. He was a patrol officer until he joined the Army, ultimately commanding an infantry company in Europe.

When the war ended, Nichols rejoined the Detroit department and worked his way up the ranks — culminating in 1970, when he was named police commissioner, the top command post on the department of 5,000 officers and civilians.

William J. Dwyer, now chief of police in Farmington Hills, was a patrol officer when Commissioner Nichols was in

Please see NICHOLS, A4

Hello: Santa Claus greets youngsters during a visit to Beard Elementary School in Detroit.



Elves: Eager helpers, including Kathleen Donnelly (right) of Farmington Hills, lend a hand at the Detroit school.

Sweet Dreams

Brought to 550 kids by an angel

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@homecomm.net

Kathleen Donnelly is the type of a person who can simultaneously give two Santas marching orders, persuade 40 or so friends and family members to volunteer, leave an otherwise exuberant elementary school principal speechless and make 550 kids feel warm and loved.

The Farmington Hills woman had "boss lady" written on her name tag, but she looked like a traffic coordinator in the hallway at Beard Elementary School on Detroit's southwest side Thursday. Some might say she's an angel.

Donnelly and her crew brought gifts, food and a bevy of holiday merriment for the school's Christmas party.

Along with three Santas, Donnelly directed a clown "Bonnie Bell" to entertain youngsters while a guitarist set up to strum electric holiday

tunes. Others frantically scurried about bringing in pizza trays and gifts.

"I hope it makes their Christmas," Donnelly said wistfully.

Such an outpouring of kindness is what the holidays are about, the school's principal said.

"It's not about what you get; it's about what you do for others," said Beard principal Dr. Carlos Lopez. "I know the kids here will remember this."

Donnelly's "Sweet Dreams" program provided children with sleeping bags, hats, slipper socks and mittens. Other gifts included Beanie Babies, books, yo-yos, Matchbox cars, trading cards, jump ropes and flashlights.

Lots to eat

Children also had pizza donated by Papa Romano's, pasta from Greg's Pizza and drinks from McDonald's for their Christmas party.

Sandwiches are standard fare at the school where 69 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunches.

"These kids don't have any hot lunches because they don't have a cafeteria," Donnelly said.

Donnelly's work is inspired by the heartache of children sleeping in the cold. Two years ago, she read a story about a basketball player at Cooley High who slept under his coat to stay warm. Donnelly phoned coach Ben Keise and offered to help.

Her family adopted a player's family for the holiday. This year, the nurse at Maplegrove and mother of three children decided to step up the effort.

She gathered neighbors, co-workers and family members at her Hills home six weeks ago.

"I got everybody together and said, 'How do you feel about not doing just one person but a whole school?' They said 'Sure,'" Donnelly said.

Ideas flowed

The crew brainstormed about ways to help. They printed up fliers and started asking for contributions. A friend who eats food to Detroit Public Schools recommended Beard Elementary, which opened in 1896 as a four-room school.

Please see DREAMS, A8

Kid's World: Japanese student designs winning logo, name

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@homecomm.net

Beechview Elementary School first-grader Akari Sakumi's playhouse design contest entry was created in hope of symbolizing a "happy time of park that everyone can enjoy," said Yoshiko Gingerich, a translator for the Japanese-speaking pupil.

Akari's "Kid's World" entry,

which features several stick-figure children holding hands and embracing Earth, was picked to be the logo for the planned Shikawasse Park playhouse in Farmington. Students from Farmington Public Schools and Our Lady of Sorrows competed, with Akari topping the eventual field of 12 finalists. Her winning entry was selected by Farmington's city council.

Gingerich, of the district's bilin-

gual education department, last week related answers to questions posed to both Akari and her mom, Kyoko, about what prompted the entry — actually a collaboration of both Akari and Kyoko.

"They wanted to participate after receiving information about the contest because of the name of the park," said Gingerich, translating Kyoko's answer. "Shikawasse, in

Please see WINNER, A8



A winner: Akari Sakumi holds her winning entry. Her mother, Kyoko, and little brother, Tomoyuki, stand in the background at Beechview Elementary.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRESLER