

# Farmlington Observer

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## THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

**Meet: The Farmington Hills City Council meets at 7:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 31555 Orchard Lake Road.**

TUESDAY

**Rainbow: Multicultural/Multiracial Council Rainbow Breakfast, 7:30 a.m., William Costick Center, 11 Mile Road.**

**ZBA: A meeting is set for 7:30 p.m. in the Hills City Council Chambers, 31555 Orchard Lake Road.**

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## Engler's address draws criticism



Local school officials gave kudos to Gov. John Engler for focusing on education in his State of the State address. But they also saw problems with the governor's proposed program for the state and its public school system.

By TIM SMITH  
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Although Farmington school district officials applauded Gov. John Engler for putting a major emphasis on education during Wednesday's "State of the State" address, they weren't sure he did enough homework before facing the cameras.

"We ought to be happy he devoted most of his speech to education issues," said Farmington schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield. "But I wish some of the things he discussed would have been discussed with local districts ahead of time."

Maxfield said he thought Engler's views, especially on topics such as education technology upgrades for Michi-

gan districts, revealed "a one-size-fits-all mentality... and we know that's not the case."

The Farmington school chief also lamented that Engler's speech didn't adequately recognize "that different schools have different needs."

Engler's proposals to create Golden Apple cash awards to improved schools and a Principal's Bill of Rights to give building administrators more power did not sit well with Maxfield.

About the Golden Apples, Maxfield said the best way to bring about improvement in schools is to "work on the real business of teaching kids and not gimmicks. I think bonuses are gim-

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micks, and I think that might promote manipulation" among schools and districts trying to position themselves for the awards.

The Principal's Bill of Rights apparently would address what some call top-heavy school administrations. But, Maxfield added, giving principals more authority to hire and fire, implement performance incentives and lead building-level curriculum improvements doesn't allow for the fact some districts are doing a better job than others.

Please see REACT, A5

## Nikki finds way home, thanks to holiday rescue



By RICHARD PEARL  
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It's gotta be the best "dog-gone" story of Christmas 1999.

At least, it is for two young West Bloomfield brothers who attend private school in Farmington.

And it's all due to some "guardian angels" they and their parents believe are wearing Farmington Public Schools bus driver uniforms.

It was 8 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 21, but already Christmas was looking very bleak to 10-year-old, teary-eyed Matthew Matusz and his mom Darlene as they walked into the Farmington Public Schools bus garage. They had come to drop off some fliers about the family's missing Shetland sheepdog, Nikki.

It all began, they said, around noon on Sunday, when Matt heard Nikki crying and let the miniature collie-type dog outside.

"I thought she'd stay with my husband because she's not a roamer," Darlene explained.

"It's not typical of the breed," the family veterinarian would later affirm.

Regardless, when Darlene checked back, Nikki had been gone a half-hour. "I'm thinking, 'She just took off after something,'" said Darlene. But all soon realized the dog had become confused and was lost.

The family, including younger brother Brett, 9, scoured the neighborhood around their Maple and Farmington Roads home and called the West Bloomfield police.

The only news: Officers said the 2-year-old, 23-pound brown-and-white

Please see NIKKI, A6

## Hills police view arrest as crime link

By JONI HUBRED  
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Farmington Hills and Franklin police have three people in custody who may be responsible for burglaries not only in those communities, but throughout southeast Michigan.

Assistant Police Chief Charles Nebus said Thursday that items recovered after the arrests included a safe, jewelry, electronics equipment and a pistol that provided a crucial link between crimes in the two cities.

"We were notified by Franklin police Wednesday that they had recovered a handgun at the scene of a burglary that we had listed as stolen," Nebus said.

The gun had been taken from the home of a Secret Service agent. That burglary was among a string of recent burglaries that caught the attention of Hills police in late December and early January. The crimes had similar aspects in that doors had been kicked in to gain entry and pillow cases were taken, Nebus said.

Franklin police caught onto the suspects

Please see BUST, A6

## Starting point

### Everest survivor urges taking first step in life



By JONI HUBRED  
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No one knows more about the will to survive than Louis Kasischke.

The survivor of an ill-fated expedition to the top of Mount Everest, he understands what it takes to face the painful and sometimes life-threatening challenges abused children handle every day. That's why he agreed to donate his time as the keynote speaker at Thursday's Circle of Friends Luncheon to benefit the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County and Care House Children's Center.

And more than ever, he understands the importance of human kindness. "It is particularly fitting that I am here today, sharing with you who are people who care about other people and by doing so, provide the strength of others to have a better life," Kasischke said.

In all, nine of those who set out in April of 1996 to conquer the tallest mountain in the world died. They lost their lives to more than six miles of unforgiving rock, ice and snow - an altitude higher than many airplanes fly, said the 56-year-old Bloomfield Hills resident.

A veteran outdoorsman and adventurer, Kasischke believes a good life comes from setting and pursuing high goals. For him, there was none higher than the Nepal summit.

"Getting to the top of Everest is like the gold medal of mountaineering," he said of his decision to join the expedition.

Instead of standing on top of the world, however, Kasischke found himself face to face with the most difficult challenge of his life, and only 394 feet

short of his goal. His very survival seems miraculous - one of every five people taking the six-week trek dies.

As he stood at the base of the mountain, he felt excitement and an overwhelming sense of humility, but also the nerve-jangling tension that comes with the uncertainty of one's own ability to overcome the odds.

"You don't accomplish any goals in life without a start," Kasischke said. "That's why I was there - to see if I had what it takes to climb the highest mountain in the world."

Over the next 42 days, the expedition pressed on, conquering their first real challenge: a 2,000-foot glacial "icefall." Climbers had to get past it early in the morning before the sun loosened massive blocks of ice and sent them cascading down the side of the mountain.

"You only concentrate on your next step," Kasischke said. "Moving forward. That's what keeps you alive in the icefall."

Successful, by the simple measure of being alive, the party next crossed the Valley of Silence, walls of ice that pose the dual threat of huge crevasses and avalanches. "The higher you go, the more difficult things become," Kasischke said. "If you make a mistake, you fall a mile. The temperature is 30 or 40 degrees below zero before windchill ... and then you ascend into thin air."

At the highest part of the mountain, oxygen is cut to one-third the level of normal air. A condition called "hypoxia" sets in, accompanied by the crippling symptoms of nausea, shortness of breath, dizziness and an inability to eat or sleep.

Please see CIRCLE, A2

Recalling his trek: Lou Kasischke is a survivor of Mt. Everest's deadliest season.



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