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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAZZINI

Plot suspect to be tethered



Upset: Lisa McIntosh, 26, who is charged with trying to hire a hit man to kill her boyfriend, talks with her attorney, Stephen Boak of Plymouth.



Judge Frederick Harris of the 47th District Court ordered Lisa McIntosh released to her parents and to be electronically tethered. She is charged with attempting to hire a hit man to kill her boyfriend.

BY TIM SMITH STAFF WRITER tsmith@oe.homecomm.net

Sitting together inside a van parked outside the Farmington Big Boy on Wednesday, Jan. 26, Lisa McIntosh poured out her heart to someone she thought was a hit man, according to the testimony of a police undercover officer.

Testimony in 47th District Court Friday and the playing of a tape-recorded conversation were enough to establish probable cause to bind the woman over for trial in a murder-for-hire case.

On the tape, a woman described a situation where the safety of her and her two children was being threatened by her live-in boyfriend. Then she

allegedly forked over \$348 in cash — in addition to a phone number, a photograph and the boyfriend's driver's license — to start the "wheels in motion" to have him murdered.

McIntosh, a Westland resident, was arrested shortly after making partial payment to a "hit man" at a meeting where she promised to get him the balance of about \$650 the following day, testimony indicated. The "hit man" turned out to be an undercover detective for the Michigan State Police, who was made aware on Jan. 25 that McIntosh wanted to hire someone to kill her allegedly abusive boyfriend.

During the preliminary examination before 47th District Judge Frederick

Please see PL07, A6

THE WEEK AHEAD

Regroup: The Great Books meeting at the Farmington Hills library branch has been cancelled for February. The group will meet again at 7 p.m. March 16. The discussion will be on Samuel Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." For more information, call the library at 553-0300.

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Digital TV: A tool or exciting feature?

BY JONI HUBBED STAFF WRITER jhubbed@oe.homecomm.net

Is it a new and exciting feature for local cable subscribers or a tool to leverage frustrating cable franchise negotiations?

Time Warner's recent announcement that digital cable service is on its way to Farmington, Farmington Hills, Redford Township and Livonia came with a caveat for local subscribers. The service won't be available until an agreement has been reached on the renewal of Time Warner's franchise.

"They've sent out a letter saying this, too, can be available to your community, once we resolve the contract," said Southwest Oakland County Cable Commission Chair Bill Hartsock. "It's as though they're trying to use that as

a little bit of leverage on some of these issues."

According to Time Warner General Manager Bob McCann, the company is simply making a business decision. He pointed to the high cost of establishing digital service and said the company is reluctant to spend that kind of money when its ability to do business in the community is still in question.

"It is certainly not a negotiating ploy," he said. "We're not going to invest those millions of dollars until we've settled the franchise renewal."

What's the advantage to digital service?

"Digital TV provides clearer pictures, improved sound quality and more program options," McCann said. "We will be able to offer about 25 or 30 new

Please see Digital, A1

Courtesy counts on the road

BY JONI HUBBED STAFF WRITER jhubbed@oe.homecomm.net

It was a typical Friday morning for a 27-year-old Detroit woman, who was driving to work in Farmington Hills.

She pulled off on the westbound I-696 exit at Orchard Lake Road and prepared to make what is, under the best of circumstances, a difficult

maneuver into the far left turn lane onto 12 Mile Road.

Without warning, an older man driving a 1980s vintage pick-up accelerated quickly around the left side of her 1997 Tracer, pulled in front of her and braked abruptly.

After verbally and divinely venting his anger over her driving, the man swerved in and out of her lane on 12 Mile, harassing her for several miles before he sped off.

The following day, a 46-year-old Southfield woman, who was pulling into the parking lot at Merchant of Vino on Middlebelt,

Please see RAGE, A4

Police breathe sigh of relief on capture

BY JONI HUBBED STAFF WRITER jhubbed@oe.homecomm.net

A Farmington Hills police detective finally took a deep breath Wednesday night, when Hills, Detroit and federal officers captured an armed robbery suspect she accidentally set free.

Chief Bill Dwyer said Thursday that Johnny Frank O'Bannon, 27, was captured without incident around 7 p.m. the night before, in front of a residence on Santa Clara in Detroit.

He was then brought back to the facility from which he walked away on Jan. 12.

"It's a great relief to the detective who erroneously released him," Dwyer said. "We're pleased there were no crimes committed while he was out."

Dwyer said the detective received a five-day suspension. Officials also issued written reprimands to two other officers involved. He felt the disciplinary actions were fair, completed after a swift but thorough investigation.

Suspect: 'I didn't escape'

BY JONI HUBBED STAFF WRITER jhubbed@oe.homecomm.net

Wearing leg shackles and a bit of a smirk, Johnny Frank O'Bannon sauntered into 47th District Court Thursday afternoon, 22 days after walking away from a Farmington Hills jail cell.

O'Bannon, 27, of Detroit was charged with armed robbery, a felony punishable by any number of years up to life in prison, and with escaping custody while awaiting

Please see ESCAPE, A5

"The mistake that was made was dealt with internally," Dwyer said. "Even though this was the first prisoner in our 20-year history to be accidentally released, obviously we will review our lock-up manual. We are looking at tighter controls."

Please see CAPTURE, A6



Treasure hunt: Maggie Malaney sports her beach shades while searching for hidden sea treasures in the sand box.

Under the sea

Kids learn swimmingly



Who? Mr. Bones wears a snorkel, mask and water wings.

Following is another installment of Today's Lesson, an occasional series which chronicles classroom activities in Farmington Public Schools.

BY TIM SMITH STAFF WRITER tsmith@oe.homecomm.net

It wasn't exactly like trying to find the Titanic deep in the Atlantic, but kindergartners at Alameda Early Childhood Center recently had a unique chance to explore their own personal "ocean."

They visited science teacher Terry Schneider's aquatic-themed classroom, complete with sand boxes, "itty bitty iguana," scuba gear and windows featuring blue tint and stenciled fish decorations. Many items on display were brought in by the entire Alameda

Please see Sea, A6

Home rule issues pit locals against lawmakers

BY JONI HUBBED STAFF WRITER jhubbed@oe.homecomm.net

To hear city officials in Farmington and Farmington Hills tell the tale, this year's crop of state lawmakers has trampled all over their rights to govern.

But legislators like Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills) say local officials don't really understand what people in Lansing are trying to do.

"I am a proponent of local control, local ordinances, local zoning, local ways of doing things, local communities taking charge of the way they want

'I am a proponent of local control, local ordinances, local zoning, local ways of doing things, local communities taking charge of the way they want to run themselves. But when it comes to state issues, a very minimal number of them but the sizable ones, then it becomes problematic.'

Andrew Raczkowski
—State representative

to run themselves," Raczkowski said in a recent interview. "But when it comes to state issues, a very minimal number of them but the sizable ones, then it becomes problematic."

For example, he believes "livable wage" rules present a significant problem for non-profit agencies. A group based in Farmington that does business in Detroit, for instance, could be

forced to pay whatever salaries prevail in the larger city, leaving less money to help the needy, Raczkowski said.

Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates said Hills officials are simply concerned with the erosion of "home rule." She thinks lawmakers, particularly during this session, have nibbled away at cities' rights and budgets, and she'd like to help them understand the challenges local officials face.

"I don't support happily all the taxes out there, but we do have to have taxes to run our city," Bates said. "They don't understand what we're going through."

Please see LOCAL, A6

