

## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Today's lesson:** Lanigan third graders use hand puppets to learn about drug and alcohol abuse. /A11

## COMMUNITY LIFE

**Korea:** A Farmington businesswoman remembers life with her dad, who survived combat in the Korea War only to be slain while working as a police officer in Detroit. /B1

**On the move:** Reporter Joni Hubred adds another chapter to her nomadic existence. See the Chat Room. /B1

## AT HOME

**Water wonder:** The design for a pond in the back yard of a Rochester Hills home has not only delighted the residents but also won a variety of awards. /D6

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Music:** On Saturday, the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra presents "Scenes and Landscapes," a concert featuring guest accordionist Peter Soave of Farmington. /E1

**Dining:** Local pubs including Dunleavy's and Cowley's are getting ready to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Many will open early and offer live entertainment. /E8

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Together: Jess Elson and Pongo, who is in training as a service dog, work in downtown Farmington.

## Pongo

### Dog dedicates his life to a human cause

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER  
STAFF WRITER

Surrogate parenting isn't easy. Jess Elson gets teary-eyed when he talks about giving up Pongo, his 11-month-old golden retriever. "I feel bad when I even think about it," said the Farmington Hills resident, his voice cracking. "But I see the people he's going to help and the quality of life they will enjoy because of him. That makes it worth it."

Pongo's life is dedicated to Paws With A Cause, a United Way-sponsored program assisting people with a range of disabilities. Paws is a national, non-profit organization based in Wayland, near Grand Rapids. Many of the dogs are rescued from shelters and humane societies.

Elson is one of about 30 foster puppy parents in Oakland County. He got Pongo when the dog was seven weeks old. The promotional advertising salesman takes Pongo with him everywhere he can. Some days, Pongo even goes to work. Fortunately, Elson is self-employed. Elson will have Pongo until the dog is about 16 months old. He will be specially trained for his new owner and then placed in a permanent home.

Paws service dogs learn to retrieve many items, from cordless phones to car keys. They can perform a variety of tricks, from opening refrigerator doors to fetching the mail.

"All of our dogs can pick up a dime off the floor and give it to the

Please see PONGO, A8

## Dems caucus site draws low turnout

Local Democrats had hoped for a better turnout for the March 11 caucus at Farmington Hills City Hall. But participants nonetheless cast their ballots, particularly for Vice President Al Gore, and put their John Hancocks on a petition supporting home rule.

By JONI HUBRED  
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If things had worked out a little differently, 6-year-old Colin Sullivan might have been playing with one of his buddies Saturday morning.

Instead — because his friend wasn't home — he ended up at Farmington Hills City Hall with his dad, Mike, learning a little about the political process. The Sullivans were among those who showed up for the March 11 Democratic caucus.

"I think it's important to participate in the process," Mike Sullivan said. "My father and grandfather did similar things with me when I was this age." For Farmington Hills resident Maisha Silver, politics is serious business. With her 2-year-old terrier Golani at her side, she mingled with other Democrats and cast her ballot.

"We are both very involved with the Democratic party," she said of herself and Golani. The family cat was unable to attend. "He's helped with mailings, and he keeps everybody company."

Call them the party faithful, those who got out at 10 a.m. on a cold Saturday morning despite the Gore landslide that emerged from Super Tuesday and the withdrawal of candidate Bill Bradley. They didn't turn out in droves, but if enthusiasm counts for anything, they presented a formidable front.

"Our task today is to unite behind Al Gore and elect a Democratic team that will build on the Clinton-Gore record."

Aldo Vagnozzi

—Gore campaign spokesperson

"Our task today is to unite behind Al Gore and elect a Democratic team that will build on the Clinton-Gore record," said Gore campaign spokesperson Aldo Vagnozzi.

The 11th Congressional District did its part, with Gore picking up 1,254 of the 1,648 votes cast in person and by

Please see CAUCUS, A8

## Water rates in city expected to increase

By TIM SMITH  
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Water rates for Farmington consumers soon will go up, probably in the 4-to-6 percent range, according to Kevin Gushman, director of the city's public services department.

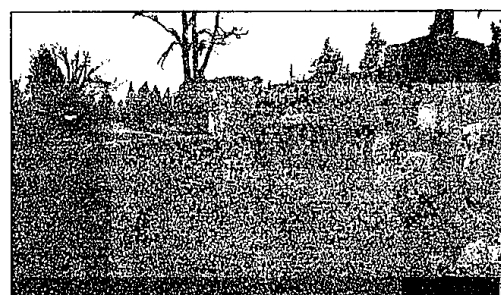
If past trends hold true, the 4.42 percent water rate hike being issued by Farmington by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department for fiscal 2000-2001 is close to the increase the Farmington City Council probably will establish and pass on to consumers, Gushman said.

Once next year's Farmington city budget is adopted, complete with water

Detroit's 4.42 percent increase in water rates is likely to be passed on to Farmington water users.

(and sewer) rates, the percentage increase for customers likely will be in the same range, explained Gushman. "We haven't determined that yet," said Gushman, about whether any ballpark per-customer increase has been tabulated. "The city council is working on the budget right now."

Please see RATES, A10



Develop: Part of the San Marino municipal golf course will be developed for housing. But a resident is unhappy with how it will be financed.

## Highmeadow change prompts complaint

By TIM SMITH  
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To accommodate three half-day teacher training workshops scheduled for Highmeadow Common Campus faculty members, the instructional day is being tweaked.

Schedule changes were announced to parents in a mid-February letter from Highmeadow Principal Beverly Miller. The Observer recently received a written complaint about those changes, which were made so that teachers

## SCHEDULING

could attend afternoon planning workshops.

"Can any school in the district opt to do this?" queried a note received this week from an anonymous source. "There was no parent meeting made public for those of us affected."

Miller could not be reached for comment on Tuesday. But several Farm-

Please see COMPLAINT, A10

## Flooded resident irked by flow of city dollars

By JONI HUBRED  
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Add to the list of those who oppose Farmington Hills' proposed Eleven Pines development one Jeannie Jones.

While she's plenty upset about the plan to build nine holes of golf on the property at 11 Mile and Haled Roads — a 23-acre portion of which is a covered landfill — what bothers Jones the most is the \$7 million going into it. Officials borrowed the money from a city utilities fund, and she doesn't understand why they can do that for a

golf course, but not for an issue of health and safety.

City council members will meet in a work session tonight, 6:30 p.m. at the William Costick Center on 11 Mile Road, to reveal the results of soil testing at Eleven Pines. No matter what the results, Jones is livid that officials would use funds for that project, but not for fixing the sewer system.

"I'm sitting here with a—in my basement for 10 years," she railed after learning about the funding this week. "I can't believe it."

Please see FLOOD, A9



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